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LABOURING BARNSELEY, 1816-1856:

A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY

Frederick James Kaijage

B.A. (East Africa), M.A. (Warwick)

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ABSTRACT

In the closing years of the 18th century, as linen weaving was displaced by cotton in many English towns, the industry took refuge in a few localities, one of which was the township of Barnsley. The Barnsley linen industry expanded in the first three decades of the 19th century and attracted a large immigrant labour force. But owing to competition from cotton and from linen produced in Ireland and Scotland, the town's linen trade began to decline. By the mid-1850's, it was no longer the staple industry. Coal had replaced it.

This study examines the social and economic structure of Barnsley during its rapid urbanization. By employing statistical sources traditionally neglected by historians, it goes beyond other social and economic histories of the period. The problems of the English linen trade, whose history has never been written, are discussed. The plight of the linen weavers who suffered from chronic unemployment, declining wages and bad living conditions, is compared and contrasted with the position of the coal miners, whose industry, in the last years of our period, enjoyed prosperity. The industrial militancy of the weavers, who persistently tried to resist wage reductions, contrasted with the relative docility of the miners.

Barnsley played a prominent role in radicalism, Chartism and other working-class movements of the early 19th century. This thesis aims to relate these developments to the community in which they took place. The class-consciousness of the Barnsley workers had many roots: the peculiar problems of the linen trade; the oligarchic nature of its parochial institutions, dominated by employers; and the influence of its immigrant population. The ideas which interacted with these forces are also discussed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

B.R.L.	Barnsley Reference Library
LWMA	London Working Men's Association
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers
P.R.O.	Public Record Office

INTRODUCTION

Barnsley, the headquarters of the new county of South Yorkshire, is also the headquarters of the Yorkshire branch of the miners' union, whose members have earned themselves a reputation as uncompromising militants. Although there is no longer any active coalmining in the town itself, the office of the National Union of Mineworkers (Yorkshire) on Huddersfield Road is a monument to a coalmining past with which the economic and social development of the town is usually associated. The few untackled slag heaps, in certain areas of the town, serve as more conspicuous reminders of that past. There is, however, a more remote past of linen weaving which, unfortunately, has not bequeathed the town with an easily identifiable historical monument, but which was the most important single factor in the urbanization of Barnsley in the early nineteenth century. Its major legacy, which to date is preserved almost intact, is the pattern of narrow streets which criss-cross the main axis of the town. Like the men who today meet at No.2 Huddersfield Road, the workers in the linen industry were reputed for their pugnacious and refractory conduct towards their superiors - social, industrial and political.

This study is an attempt to recapture that past in early nineteenth century Barnsley, when linen manufacturing rose and fell to be replaced by coalmining. The object of special attention is the working class. Nevertheless, the study as a whole has much to offer as a social and economic history of the town, for the history of its workers was made in the larger world of the whole community. Indeed, the story is written in the context of British social and economic history in the Industrial Revolution.

There are many reasons why Barnsley is specially significant. From very early in the 19th century up to the mid-Victorian period, it was the centre of linen production in England. The English linen industry in the 19th century has never been studied. This thesis lays the foundation for such a study and shows how linen interacted with cotton - claimed by some economic historians to have been the mainspring of the Industrial Revolution. In the period of our study linen suffered from many economic crises and went through a long period of decline. We shall examine the traumatic impact of these experiences on the industry's labour force and how, in turn, they responded to their plight.

The decline of linen coincided with the expansion of coalmining in Barnsley. We shall address ourselves to the blessings and problems of transition from one industry to another. By the mid-century employment prospects were better and wages were higher in mining than in linen weaving. The younger members of the linen weaving families easily obtained employment in the mines. But for the older weavers, such mobility was difficult as it entailed psychological readjustment and greater physical exertion. And even if they could move, employment in mining was not unlimited.

Among the industrial towns of the West Riding, the Barnsley working class was in the vanguard of radical politics, Chartism and other working-class movements. This study offers an opportunity for a re-examination of these movements and the whole issue of class-consciousness. It will be argued that the social and industrial set up of Barnsley in this period rendered the labouring population highly class-conscious.

The choice of the period has been given careful consideration. The starting date, 1816, is associated with both the rapid and unprecedented expansion of linen production and the rise of working-class radicalism.

By the last date, 1856, linen production was declining and working-class radicalism was a departed force. By the 1810's linen had become the staple trade of Barnsley. It was experiencing rapid expansion, attracting an influx of workers from many areas. This had serious social and economic repercussions which are explored further in the pages below. It is arguable that the rise of Barnsley working-class radicalism was, in part, a product of the rapid urbanization of Barnsley due to linen. By the mid-1850's the linen trade had ceased to dominate the economy of the town. Although the linen weavers were still the largest single occupational group, there was a rapid exodus from linen weaving into coal mining. At the same time, many other forms of economic activity, like engineering enterprises and craft industries, were expanding, thus contributing towards a more diversified, though still coal-dominated, economy. The hand-loom weaver culture which had characterised the town for more than half a century, was no longer dominant. Also, there was hardly any trace of the old radical bravado which had been a characteristic feature of Barnsley working-class protest from 1816. The men's resources of radical protest were being channelled into the campaign for the improvement of public health and social amenities; into organized labour; into social and intellectual improvement; and into municipal politics. This study ends at the cross-roads, a time of transition not only from linen to coal production but also from political radicalism to mid-Victorian liberalism and to an involvement in more tangible local issues.

Our study is thematic rather than chronological, though each theme is discussed within a chronological framework. We have also tried to maintain the inter-connection between the different themes of our larger subject. The study is divided into two parts. The first part is

a composite picture of the Barnsley environment insofar as it affected the mass of the labouring population. It constitutes, basically, a reconstruction of their economic and social conditions. Chapter One traces the development of Barnsley from a manorial market town at the end of the 18th century to an industrial community by the mid-nineteenth century. An examination is made of the environmental and institutional changes over the period. Chapters Two and Three discuss in detail the linen and coal industries with special attention to the experiences of their labour forces. Chapters Four and Five look at two important social issues: poor relief and sanitary improvement. Although those on poor relief were usually (though not always) in the minority, they constituted a group the membership of which, at one time or another, stared every hand-loom weaver in the face. The sanitary condition of the town and what was done about it affected every working man and woman. In fact, the residential areas of the labouring classes suffered serious sanitary neglect.

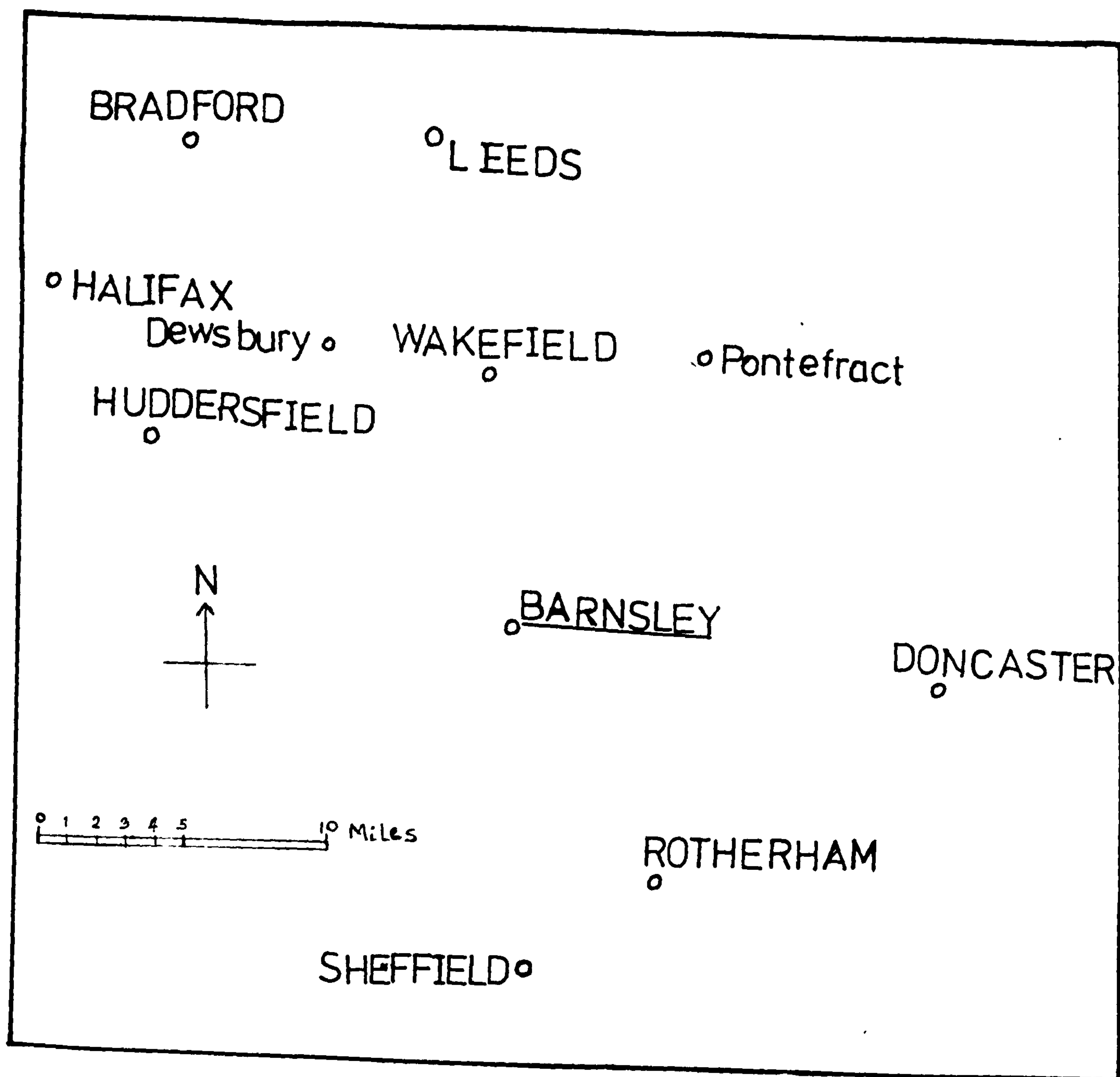
In the second part of the thesis the working people cease to be objects under the sway of impersonal forces around them and assume their role as historical agents, active in the forging of their own destiny. In other words, it is a behavioural study of working-class response to their own environment. However, the interaction between the labouring population and its own environment was a two-way process. They created their environment as much as it created them. The rather simplistic division in the structure of the thesis is nothing more than an expository convenience. Like the first part, and even more so, this part of the study is highly selective. It looks only at responses in the shape of industrial and political confrontation, partly because these are relatively easy to document. As we have been rightly told, examining the history of working-class men at times of crises and conflicts is of profound importance.

Only at such times do many of them become articulate, unfurling before the historian the complex web of social and economic forces.¹ Industrial disputes in the linen and coal industries are discussed in Chapters Six and Seven respectively. In Chapter Eight we look at the radical activity which followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars. In this period the foundations were laid for the working-class radical culture of the early nineteenth century. In the last Chapter we trace the rise and fall of Chartism and offer a reinterpretation of this phenomenal movement.

¹ J.F.C. Harrison, "A Knife and Fork Question: Some Recent Writing on the History of Social Movements." Victorian Studies, Vol.XVIII, No.2, (Dec. 1974), p. 220.

PART 1

THE LABOURING WORLD



MAP NO.1: LOCATION OF BARNSELY

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

Lo! o'er Dearne's stream, that gently glides
Bleak Barnsley's cloud-wreath'd head
Where trade not kind to all, provides
Her children's well earned bread.

(Joseph Wilkinson, Barnsley historian and Chartist).

I. The Location of the Town:

Barnsley is almost centrally placed between Leeds, 19 miles to the north, and Sheffield, 14 miles to the south. The major industrial towns of what until lately was the West Riding of Yorkshire, most of them strongholds of early nineteenth century plebeian rebellion, are within a radius of 25 miles of Barnsley. Besides Leeds and Sheffield, such towns are: Wakefield to the north; Huddersfield, Bradford and Halifax to the north-west; Doncaster to the east; and Rotherham to the south-east.¹ The size, nature and appearance of the town has changed a great deal since the early nineteenth century but the general picture of its situation is virtually the same, and William White's description of it in 1837 remains substantially accurate. In his West Riding Directory he described Barnsley as "a populous and flourishing market town seated on the eastern acclivities and near the summit of a lofty eminence, rising in bold swells to a considerable elevation above the river Dearne and the brooks and canals which skirt its expansive base."²

¹See Map Number 1.

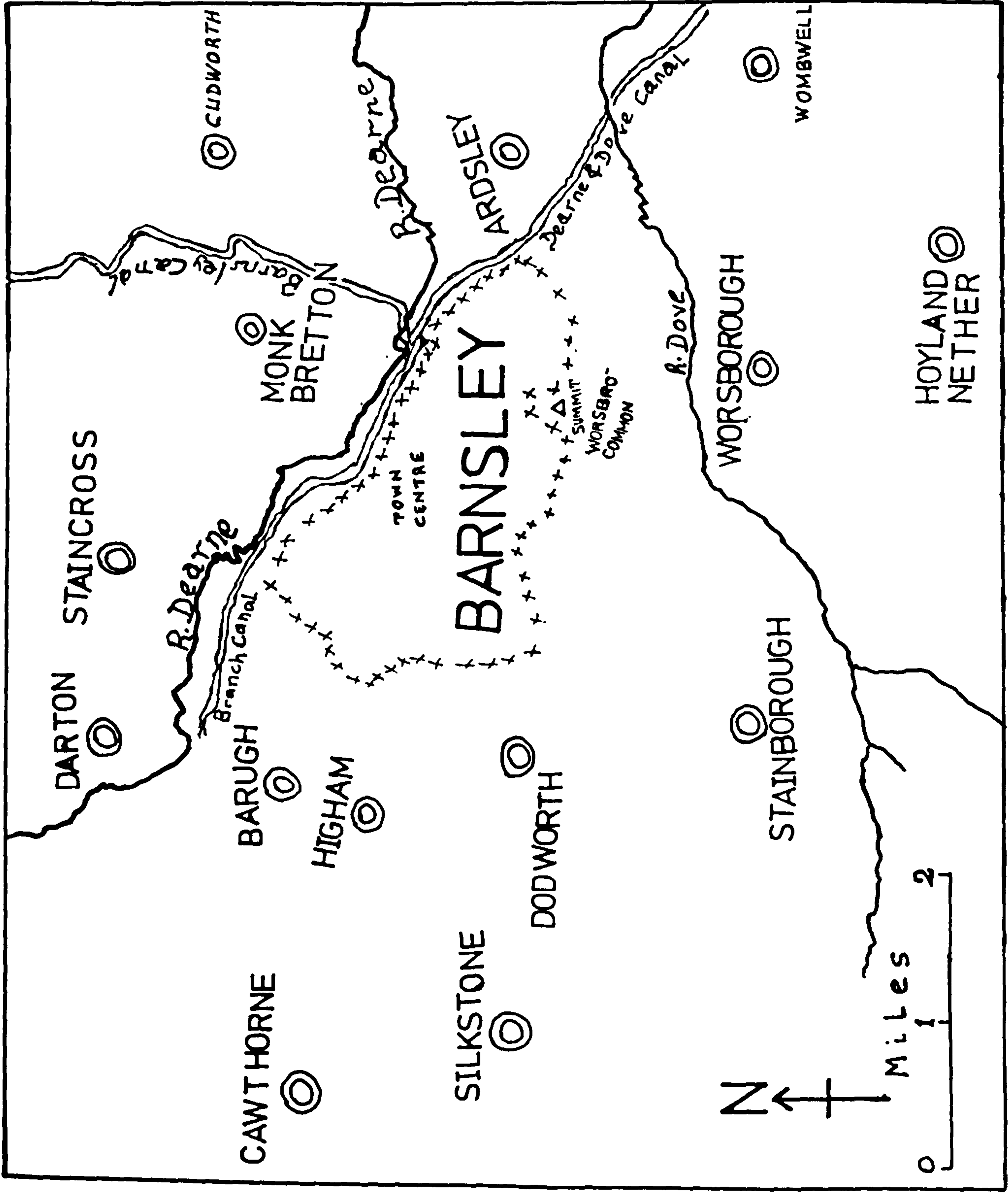
²William White, History, Gazetteer and Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Vol.I (Sheffield, 1837), p.310.

All the features mentioned in the above description are still there, some in a modified or changed form. The river Dearne, separating Barnsley from the smaller satellite townships of Darton and Monk Bretton, winds its way to the north and east of Barnsley in a south-easterly direction. The brooks which "skirted its expansive base" have been drained in the name of modernization. Along the valley of the Dearne stand slag heaps and a few derelict industrial sites, themselves relics of the town's more prosperous past. The Barnsley and the Dearne and Dove Canals, products of enormous 18th century human and capital investments, and now out of use, can still be seen to the north and south-east of the town, respectively. The present Park Road in the southern part of the town cuts across that 'summit' of the 'lofty eminence', then most probably an empty field, but now occupied by the Locke Park and a complex of elegant residential features like the 'California Gardens'. Southwards, the summit descends towards Worsborough and the Dove valley. From this same summit, if one looks northwards in the direction of the Dearne valley, one commands a good view of the town.³ But for a sprinkling of 'modern' blocks, the place is littered with buildings of a Victorian-type of architecture which have a rather grim, decayed appearance, an appearance symptomatic of the town's present 'lean times'. The main axis of the town has retained a good number of its narrow eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' streets, with their old names virtually intact. To borrow Professor G.H. Martin's expression, Barnsley's slate has not as yet been scrubbed quite clean.⁴

The surrounding country is hilly and picturesque, and affords a variety of views. Barnsley is surrounded by little townships and hamlets, all making up the Barnsley district for which the town is the natural centre. Outstanding among these are Darton, Monk Bretton, Notton, Woolley and High Hoyland in the north; Worsborough, Stainbrough and Hoyland Nether

³See Map Number 2.

⁴See G.H. Martin, "The Town as Palimpsest" in H.J. Dyos (ed.), The Study of Urban History, (1968), p.156.



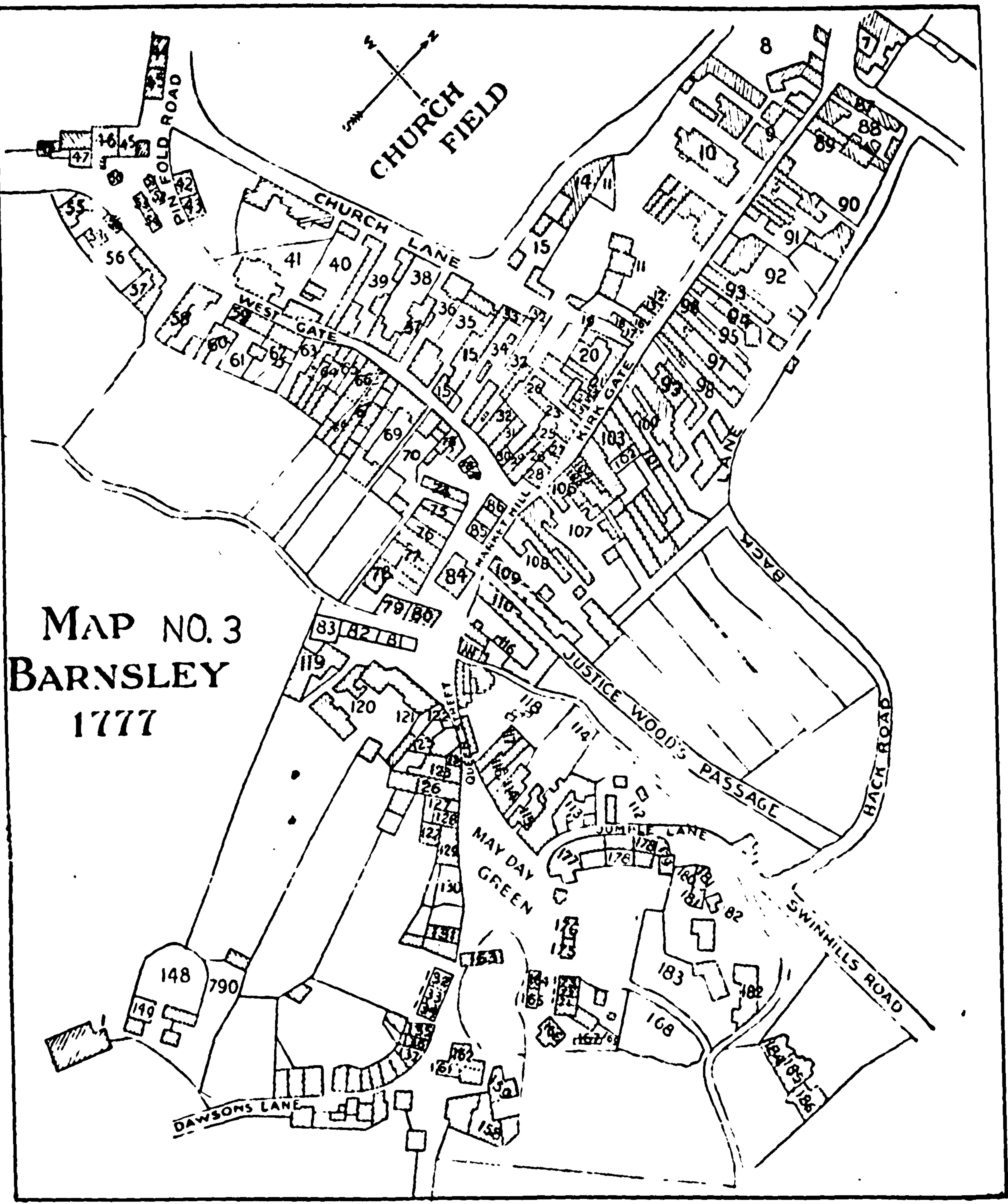
MAP NO.2: BARNSELY & ENVIRONS

in the south; Barugh, Dodworth, Silkstone, Higham and Cawthorne in the west; and Ardsley, Darfield, Wombwell and Billingley in the east. Most of these occupy rich agricultural land, suitable for the cultivation of grain; in fact most of them grew up as agricultural villages. But in the last century agriculture was overshadowed by coalmining. Now, as then, these environs depend on Barnsley for a whole variety of things: for shopping, for marketing their products, for employment, for entertainment, and for a score of other facilities. In its turn Barnsley receives a number of things from its neighbourhood: some of its food, manpower, coal, and even employment. In the nineteenth century and before the bond of interdependence was even stronger. Much of the town's food supply sold at the weekly markets and in the shops came from its neighbourhood. The rapid development of the mining industry in the district afforded employment for the town's population, especially when the linen industry began to suffer a long and agonizing decline, starting from the late 1830's. For the country folk round Barnsley, the town was very much a centre of attraction. Many looked to the Barnsley linen masters for employment; they bought the novel imported or manufactured goods in the Barnsley shops; some looked forward to the weekly markets in town where they would purchase industrial products and dispose of their agricultural surplus; and most of them enjoyed partaking of the town's annual fairs and festivities. The town was also a centre for communication, news and discussion, for here the mail coaches were unloaded of their letters, parcels and the weekly papers from London, Leeds or Sheffield. The town, therefore, set the tone for the surrounding townships and hamlets.

Barnsley enjoyed some natural advantages which contributed to its prosperity. The numerous streams and brooks, most of which were tributaries of the Dearne river, helped in the bleaching of linen. In this connection, the extensive open fields were used as bleach-greens, or crofts, on which the linen cloths were spread during the bleaching process. Much of the Barnsley district is underlain by rich beds of coal. The small area of Barnsley and the immediate neighbourhood between the river Dearne in the north and east, and the river Dove in the south is crossed, roughly from north-west to south-east, by the outcrops of the most important coal seams in South Yorkshire, among which is the Barnsley, by far the richest and most extensive. When the district was reached by railway, beginning from 1840, it became possible to exploit, on a large scale, this immense natural wealth. The town's industrial prosperity, which otherwise would have been arrested by the declining fortunes of the linen trade, was now enhanced.⁵

This chapter looks at the general development of Barnsley in the first half of the nineteenth century with the aim of providing a foundation for the ensuing discussion on the economic, social and political developments in the context of the subject of this study. The survey traces, in general terms, the evolution of Barnsley from a small market town, symbiotically linked with its agricultural hinterland, to a viable industrial locality. Initial questions are raised concerning the development and characteristics of its total society in general and its labouring community in particular. The central value of the chapter lies in its attempt to establish a basis for our understanding of the ecology of the social classes, especially of

⁵For details, see Chapter Three.



MAP NO. 3
BARNSELY
1777

our central subject, the Barnsley working class.

II. The Changing Environment:

Under the local Improvement Act of 1822 the township of Barnsley was defined, for improvement purposes, as that area covering a radius of twelve hundred yards in every direction of the old Moot Hall, a building situated on Market Hill, roughly in front of the present Town Hall, and which was pulled down in 1820.⁶ Although this area constituted the main axis of the town, the term Barnsley denoted something much larger: in one sense it meant the town and the surrounding district, and in another sense, much more relevant for our purpose, it usually meant the chapelry of Barnsley as a division of the parish of Silkstone. We might term this as the "Poor Relief Zone", an area, that is, over which the Barnsley overseers of the poor had jurisdiction. It is this area, consisting of 2,385 acres, that in the census enumerations of our period was known as the township of Barnsley, and it is the area covered by this study. But, by and large, the town's events were determined by what went on in the central 'Improvement Zone' where by far the majority of the population was heavily concentrated. The rest of the chapelry consisted of rather scattered clusters of human settlement and open, or cultivated, or mining land.

The oldest map of Barnsley available dates back to 1777,⁷ the year when an Act was passed for the enclosure of commons in the township. It shows how small was the inhabited area, and comparison of this map with

⁶ 3.Geo.IV Cap XXV.

⁷ Map Number 3.

that based on one drawn in 1852 will show a tremendous expansion in the area occupied by buildings, most of which were residential.⁸ This is confirmed by the statistics of residential houses collected along with the population censuses:⁹

<u>Census Year</u>	<u>Total number of completed houses</u>
(1777)	(680)
1801	
1811	967
1821	1,441
1831	2,200
1841	2,432
1851	2,922
1861	3,755

The 1777 enclosure award, as it were, opened up the area both for cultivation and, especially, for the building industry. A total of some 580 acres was parcelled out to about 100 families; some sold their share of the land and others retained it and developed it themselves. From this time on you had a multiplication of private streets, courts, and alleys, most occupied by rows of back-to-back weavers' cottages. Two examples stand out very prominently. Joseph Beckett, linen manufacturer, obtained eight allotments with a total area of twenty acres. He used one of his allotments on Warren Common to erect a row of 40 weavers' cottages which came to be called 'Beckett Square'. In 1841 this estate

⁸ See Map Number 6 . The shaded areas are those occupied by buildings. Note that Wilson's Piece, the Weavers' ghetto in our period, was at this time, unoccupied.

⁹ Compiled from the Census Abstracts, 1801-1861. Some idea of the physical expansion can also be gleaned from E.G. Tasker, Barnsley Streets, vols. 1 & 2 (Chesterfield, 1974).

was occupied by 280 people.¹⁰ The nephews of William Wilson, founder of the town's linen trade, were awarded an area also on Warren Common in the southern part of the town. The allotment, later known as "Wilson's Piece", was hardly twenty acres in area, but it had the highest density of population throughout the period of this study. During the heyday of the town's linen trade, it was crammed with weavers' cottages erected by different landlords. By 1841 this spot, which constituted less than one per cent of the total area, consisted of about fifteen streets with a population of more than 2,000 or 20 per cent of the town's total.¹¹ The weavers' stronghold became notorious as the quagmire of unlighted streets where "gutters yawned, ash-heaps spread and the mire was deep." Also, Wilson's Piece became "as prolific in theories as, while under cultivation, it (had been) in cereals. ... Its quandram crops of Radicalism, Trades Unionism, and Chartism" flourished; and its "popular commotions" were "a sharp thorn in the sides of Dogberries."¹²

The unplanned mushrooming of so many streets and buildings within a relatively short time created inevitable tensions and necessitated an administrative machinery whereby the town could be made a better place to live in. Such a machinery was conferred by the Act of 1822 "for the lighting, paving, cleansing, watching and improving the Town..."¹³

¹⁰"Valuation List, Barnsley, 1848." (MS, Barnsley Reference Library hereafter, B.R.L.); 1841 census schedules: MS, P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

¹¹John Hugh Burland, "Social and Scenic Pictures of Barnsley in the 18th century," (cuttings from the Barnsley Times, 1878, B.R.L.), n.p. The street and population figures have been compiled from the census enumerators' returns, P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

¹²Burland in Ibid. For the sanitary neglect of Wilson's Piece see Chapter Five.

¹³Quoting 3.Geo.IV Cap XXV.

This act had been promoted by the upper echelons of the community who were alarmed by the adverse social and sanitary effects of Barnsley's rapid growth. How far this legislation helped to solve the problems it was created to deal with must be reserved for a subsequent chapter,¹⁴ but suffice it to say at this stage that the Improvement Commissioners acted under serious constraints: legal, social and financial. To a large extent, the social and environmental headaches of urban growth remained.

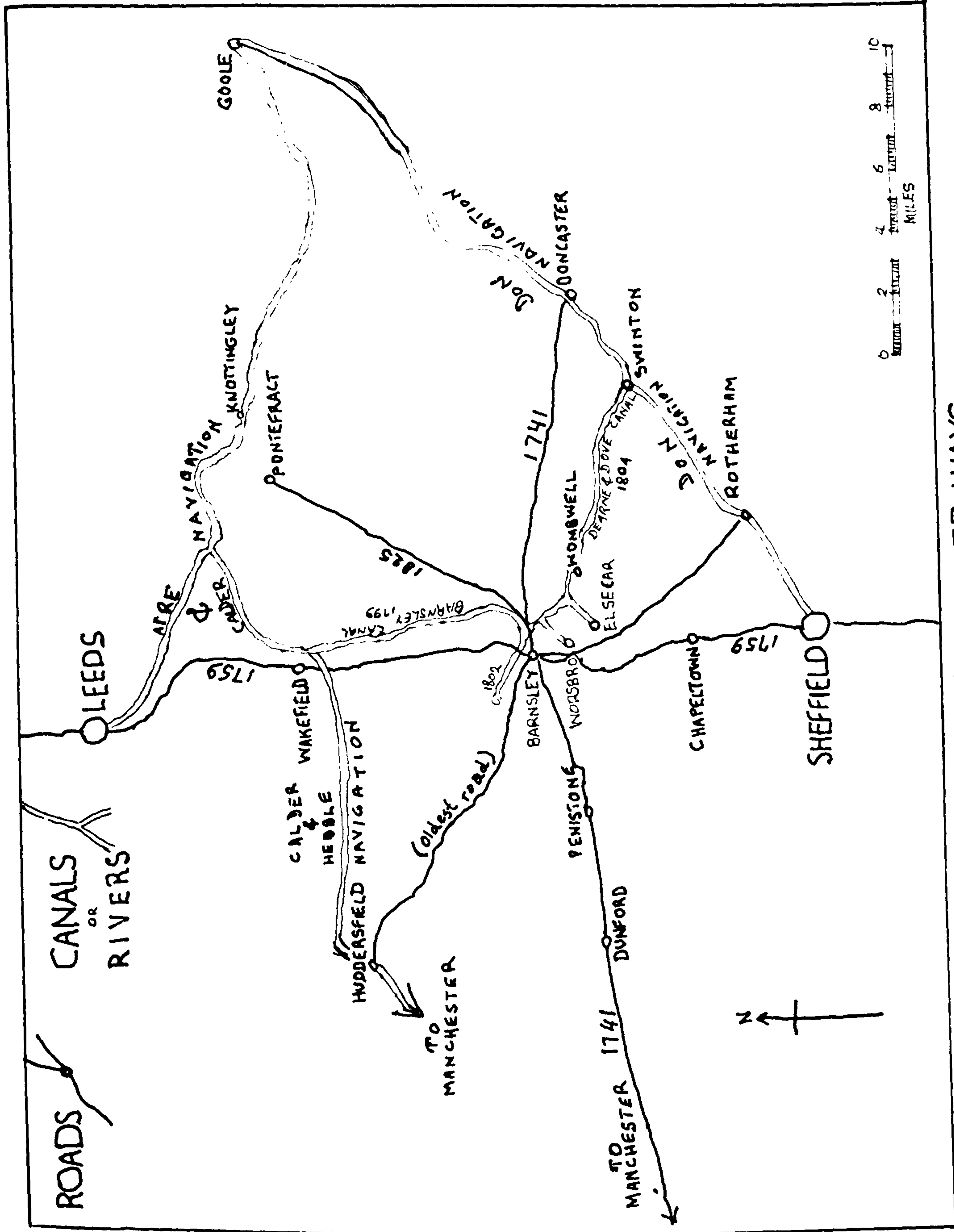
Along with Barnsley's internal physical expansion went a growth of its communications with the rest of the country which, in chronological terms, developed from road to canal and on to railway.¹⁵ From the Roman days, Barnsley has always been along one of the main highways running from north to south. The Roman road which ran from Chesterfield by way of Sheffield, Barnsley, Hemsworth and Ackworth joined, near Pontefract, the famous Roman 'Watling Street' which traversed the whole length of England from north to south. But the real breakthrough in road transport was the construction of turnpike roads. In the case of Barnsley, four major turnpikes linked the town to the major towns in all directions.¹⁶ The Barnsley and Grange Moor road, constructed during the reign of George II, was the oldest. It went along the present Shambles Street, Sackville Street, Victoria Street,

¹⁴ See Chapter Five below.

¹⁵ The following section on the development of road transport around Barnsley is based on : J. Lodge, "Barnsley in the coaching days," in Lodge's Almanack, 1899 (Barnsley, 1899) n.p.: G.R. Batho (ed.), "Barnsley in 1869, the Growth of an Industrial Town," (mimeo. University of Sheffield, Institute of Education, 1959), pp.25-29.

¹⁶ See Map Number 4.

over Jordan Hill, by way of Gawber, to Redbrook and on to Grange Moor where it joined the main highway to Huddersfield. The idea of a Doncaster to Saltersbrook road was first discussed by the residents of Doncaster and Barnsley in 1734 and seven years later an Act of Parliament authorized its construction. Not only did this road connect Barnsley with Doncaster, an important corn market town in the east, but it permitted a relatively easier carriage of goods traffic across the great natural barrier of the Pennines in the west. From Saltersbrook in Cheshire another road went to Manchester. Before this turnpike was built, tradesmen used to lead their horses across the moors to fetch and carry their merchandise to and from Manchester. In the early 1820's an Act of Parliament allowed for a diversion on this turnpike which had by-passed Barnsley by way of Dodworth Bottom. This diversion ran from Scout Bridge to Dodworth and thence to Barnsley and shortened the distance from Barnsley to Manchester by doing away with the round-about path via Keresforth Hill to the south-west of the town. An Act for the construction of the Leeds, Wakefield, Barnsley, and Sheffield Turnpike Road was passed in 1759. This north to south road, unlike the road to Manchester which handled mainly goods traffic, was used mostly for passenger traffic. In 1760 the first London coach passed through Barnsley, the journey to London taking three days. In 1826 the 'Herald' coach which ran from London to Glasgow passed through Barnsley for the first time. In the town itself the building of this turnpike opened up what are now Eldon Street and Sheffield Road, the former leading on to the road to Wakefield and Leeds and the latter, as the name suggests, going to Sheffield. In about 1830 the road to Wakefield was diverted by



MAP NO.4: ROAD- & WATER-WAYS.

way of Monk Bretton, Carlton and Royston, thus linking these small townships with Barnsley and other areas. The last of the important roads was the Barnsley and Pontefract turnpike authorized by the Act of 1825. It connected Barnsley with the existing highway leading to Pontefract at Cudworth Bridge. By 1830, therefore, the town was well-served with an extensive road network linking it with areas of commercial and administrative or political significance.¹⁷

At the time when Britain was experiencing an industrial revolution, road transport was found to be grossly inadequate: it was long, arduous, risky, limited in capacity, and, above all, expensive. No doubt the so-called canal era of 1760-1830 was a response to the failure of the road transport to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding economy. Barnsley was served by two important canals: the Barnsley Canal and the Dearne-and-Dove Canal, the former promoted by the Aire and Calder Navigation interests and the latter by the Don Navigation Company. The two canal projects started off as rival schemes but in time the two authorities thrashed out their differences and in 1792 obtained the necessary legislation for the canals.¹⁸ The Barnsley Canal, which joined the Aire and Calder Navigation near Wakefield, was opened in June 1799. The upper part of the Canal, from Old Mill to Barnby Basin, however, was completed in 1802. By linking Barnsley with the Aire and Calder Navigation, the Canal gave it access to such important places as Leeds, Manchester and the port of Hull. The Dearne-and Dove Canal was completed in 1804. The nine-mile long canal started in

¹⁷It is important to note in this connection that the West Riding was in the vanguard of turnpike building during the 'transport revolution' - See Baron F. Dukham, The Transport Revolution, 1750-1830 (Historical Association Aids for Teachers Series No.14, 1967), p.3.

¹⁸Barnsley Canal: 33 Geo.III, C.100; Dearne-and-Dove: 33 Geo.III, C.115.

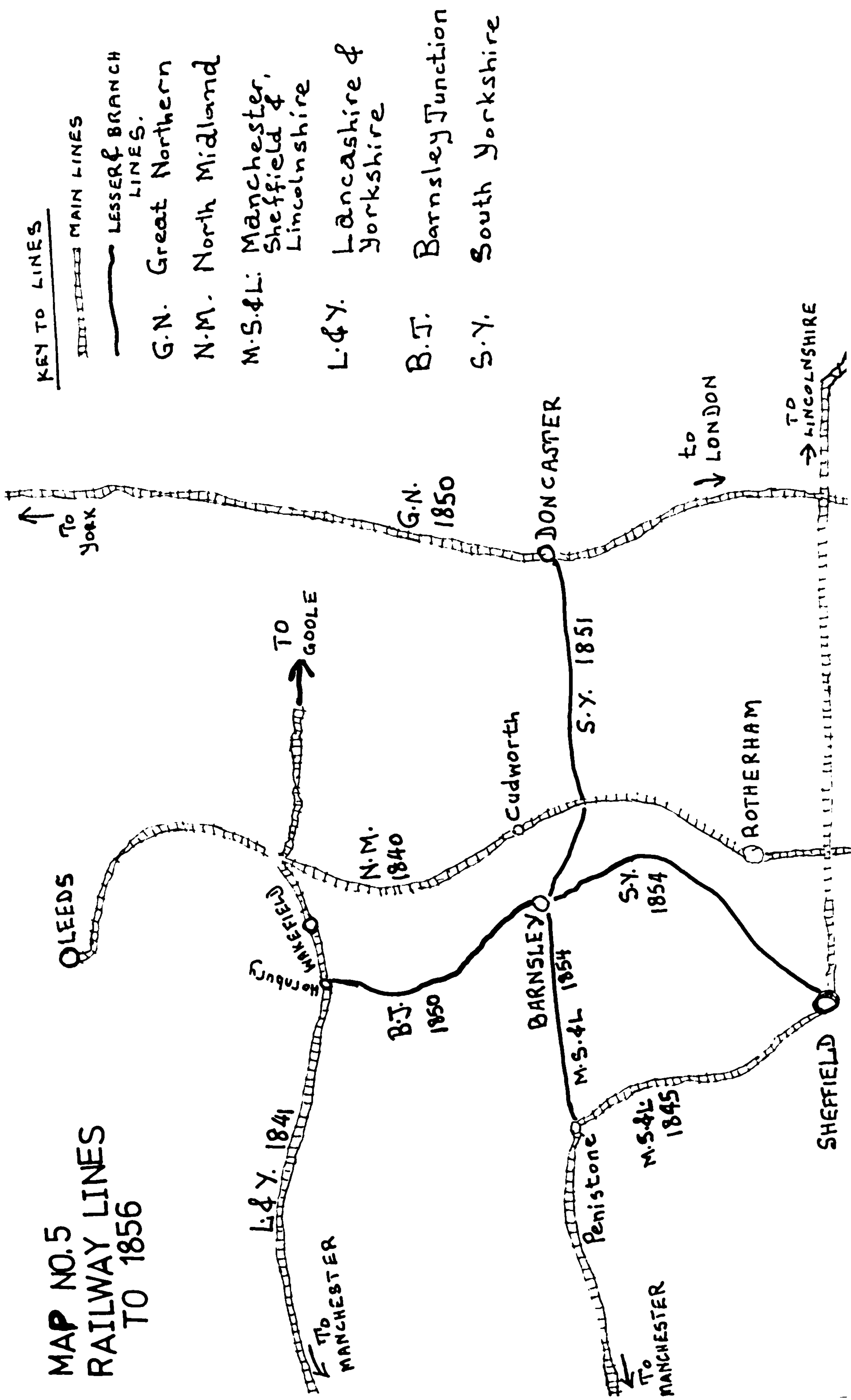
a side cut in Swinton belonging to the River Don Navigation and went north-westwards by way of Wath, Brampton, Wombwell, Ardsley, to Barnsley where it formed a junction with the Barnsley Canal at Old Mill, north of the town. It had branches to the mining townships of Elsecar and Worsborough. In the south, the Dearne-and-Dove linked Barnsley with the Don Navigation and the River Trent (by means of the Stainforth and Keadby Canal), giving its people and their products access by water communication to such areas as Sheffield, Doncaster and, again, the port of Hull. In 1847 the Dearne-and-Dove Canal was acquired by the South Yorkshire, Doncaster and Goole Railway (after 1850, the South Yorkshire Railway and Don Navigation Company). In 1852 the same Railway firm took over the Barnsley Canal. The events of 1847 and 1852 signified the growing strength of the railway industry whose economic importance had by then superceded that of canal navigation.¹⁹

The first railway to reach the Barnsley district was built by the Midland Railway Company. The Company had originally proposed the line to go from Derby, via Chesterfield, Sheffield, Barnsley, Wakefield and on to Leeds. Owing to the difficulties in the terrain, it was decided to by-pass Sheffield, Barnsley and Wakefield and join them by branch lines. Work began in 1837, and in 1840 the first train arrived at Cudworth, three miles north-east of the town. Passengers were transported to Barnsley by omnibus. The branch line to Barnsley was not built until 1869.²⁰

¹⁹Batho, op.cit., pp.29-31; Charles Hadfield, The Canals of Yorkshire and North-east England, Vol.I (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp.169-188.
W.N. Slatcher, "The Barnsley Canal: its first twenty years," Transport History, Vol.I, 1968, pp.46-66.

²⁰Batho, op.cit., pp.31-33.

MAP NO.5 RAILWAY LINES TO 1856



Another important railway line to reach Barnsley by 1850 was initiated by the Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley, Wakefield, Huddersfield and Goole Railway Company formed in 1846 and empowered by a Parliamentary Act of August that year to build a line from two junctions with the Sheffield and Rotherham Railway to two junctions with the Manchester and Leeds Railway near Hornbury, west of Wakefield, with a branch to collieries at Silkstone. At the company's first general meeting of October 5, 1846 it was proposed to hand over the entire section south of Barnsley to the South Yorkshire, Doncaster and Goole Company. This transaction was actually carried out with the sanction of an Act of Parliament of July 22, 1847. The operating company became the South Yorkshire Railway and River Don Company in April 1850. The northern section from Barnsley to Hornbury, together with the Silkstone branch, was leased to the Manchester and Leeds Railway from May 1847. In August 1849 a committee of works, representing the north and south divisions of the line, approved plans for the building of a station at Barnsley. On January 1, 1850 the line was opened to passengers between Wakefield and Barnsley; a fortnight later the line began to handle goods and mineral traffic. By means of the Wakefield, Pontefract and Goole Railway traffic from Barnsley was relayed to the eastern port of Goole. The southern half of the railway was opened on July 1, 1851; it had a branch to Worsborough and Dodworth. The line from Aldam Junction to Barnsley facilitated services to Doncaster. In 1854 a branch line of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway from Pennistone to Barnsley was completed. It was instrumental in the exploitation of the Silkstone coal. A major breakthrough had been achieved. Barnsley was served by a railway network which linked it with commercial and industrial centres:

Leeds, Manchester, London, Liverpool and Sheffield. One of the most important places that Barnsley had a railway connection with was the port of Goole in the north-east. This port, twenty miles upstream from Hull, had been constituted as a port for foreign trade way back in 1827. It was, and still is, the nearest port to the Yorkshire coalfield and manufacturing towns.²¹

III. The Economic Sector:

The motive force behind all the above-mentioned infrastructural changes in and about the town was the industrial and commercial activities going on there. The changes and the activities were, of course, inextricably interrelated as cause and effect. Although Barnsley started off as a mere market town, serving the needs of an agricultural neighbourhood, it eventually developed an industrial structure which, from the seventeenth century, was always dominated by three successive staple industries: wire drawing, linen manufacture and coal mining. It is said that by the time of James I Barnsley was famous for wire drawing. Even in the last years of the eighteenth century, wire drawing, though on the decline, still accounted for a large proportion of the town's industry. In 1789, for example, there were as many wire manufacturers as there were linen masters.²²

²¹The best reference for this paragraph is John Marshall, The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, Vol.I, (Newton Abbot, 1969), pp.201-217. See also: D.L. Franks, South Yorkshire Railway (Leeds, 1971), pp.5-21. See Map Number 5.

²²Roland Jackson, The History of the Town and Township of Barnsley in Yorkshire from an Early period (1858), p.166.

Such an industry, however, which catered for a very limited market, was essentially a small-scale workshop craft industry which experienced no dramatic changes in terms of technological innovations or scale of operation.

The closing years of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth saw a burgeoning linen trade which changed the whole character of the town by injecting into it a social and economic dynamism hitherto unknown. It dominated, indeed determined, the pace and nature of the town's development. From 1744, when a humble but astute William Wilson from Cheshire introduced the trade into the town, linen weaving grew, albeit slowly, with ever-increasing speed until the first decade of the nineteenth century when its pace quickened. By the end of the Napoleonic wars the linen industry was unquestionably the staple trade on which more than half the town's population depended for a living. Statistical evidence strongly indicates that even by the first decade of the century, linen manufacture was already the major industry of the town. The figures in Table 1.1 are based on the Militia List of 1806 giving the occupations of all males between the ages of 18 and 45. Forty-four per cent of this sample were engaged in the different branches of linen production especially in weaving.

Table 1.1: A Sample of Occupational Categories in 1806.

	Linen Weavers	Other Linen Workers, e.g.bleachers	Colliers	Skilled Artizans	Other occupns.	Linen Manfrs.	Gentlemen, Traders, Profes-sionals, etc.	
No.	186	46	24	105	156	45	11	47
%	30%	7%	4%	17%	25%	7%	2%	8%

Compiled from "Militia List for the Township of Barnsley, Sept.6, 1806," (Ms., Cusworth Hall Museum, nr. Doncaster). The relatively large proportion of linen manufacturers would suggest a large proportion of the small "putters-out" at this time.

The essential feature in the organization of production was the cottage handloom weaver who fetched the yarn from his employer, wove it into cloth and took it to his boss's warehouse to receive payment. It was the employer, commonly known as the manufacturer, who bought the linen yarn and marketed the final product. In some cases he even owned the looms worked by the weavers. By the 1840's some manufacturers had embarked on the steam power production of linen. The majority of the manufacturers, however, continued to employ hand-looms. Linen weaving was the principal branch of the trade but with it there grew ancillary branches of linen production, like bleaching, dyeing, callendering, and, later, printing. Many manufacturers were hard-hit by the depressions which began in the late 1830's. By the second half of the nineteenth century the Barnsley linen trade was a sick and declining industry and, though still employing a large proportion of the working population, its employees, especially the handloom weavers, were receiving very depressed wages. At this time, however, Barnsley and its district had been reached by an extensive railway network which helped to open up, on a large scale, its rich coal deposits.

In the second half of the nineteenth century coal mining became the economic king of Barnsley, rescuing the town from the prospects of an economic disaster which would otherwise have resulted from the decline of the linen trade. Younger members of the families moved from linen winding and weaving into the mines as trappers, hurriers and, eventually, as colliers. In this new and expanding industry the work was hard but the wages were higher and less capricious than in the languid linen trade. There were many pits within the township, but some mineworkers had to travel some distance to places of work in other pits in the vicinity, for example, Worsborough and Ardsley.

Besides the major industries, a whole host of enterprises sprang up either as subsidiaries of the staple industries or simply as undertakings created to satisfy the needs of the town's rising population. Table 1.2, based on the lists in the local directories, gives a general picture of the economic enterprises in four main divisions: Major industrial, minor industrial, commercial, and professional establishments. It is likely that the directories were not all-inclusive and might have left out some enterprises but it is very unlikely that they failed to cover the important ones. The classification of the trades has been modified to facilitate comparison over a long period. Many of those which were listed separately in the directories have been grouped together, for example, book sellers, book binders, printers, stationers and newsagents.

A mere glance at the section of major industrial establishments will show that the linen manufacturers were the dominant group. Of the total major industrial enterprises, the linen manufacturing ones constituted in 1816, 71 per cent; in 1822, 45 per cent; in 1837, 40 per cent; in 1852, 39 per cent; in 1862, 24 per cent; and in 1872, also 24 per cent. The percentage figures are higher if we include ancillary industries of the linen trade, like bleaching, dyeing and calendering. The trend over the period 1816-1872 indicates the declining relative importance of linen manufacturing. It points to such a decline but it does not establish it. It tells us nothing about the level or value of output, the scale of operation, or the number of persons employed. Linen output figures are scanty and unreliable. But the returns from the census schedules give a useful occupational breakdown which enables one to determine, for example, what proportion of the working population was involved in the linen trade.

Table 1.2: Classification of Economic Enterprises, 1816-1872

MAJOR INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS

TYPE OF BUSINESS etc.	Y E A R					
	1816	1822	1837	1852	1862	1872
Bleachers	6	6	9	4	6	3
Boiler Makers					1	2
Brickmakers					3	9
Calenderers		3	3	3	2	3
Coach Builders					3	2
Coal Owners & Merchants	2	4	2	9	7	10
Corn Millers		2	2	5	4	7
Cotton Spinners					3	2
Dyers		3	6	7	10	11
Flax Spinners		1	1			
Glass Bottle Manufacturers					1	1
Iron & Brass Founders	2	2	4	3	4	9
Linen & Calico Printers					2	2
Linen Manufacturers	29	32	33	36	22	24
Loom & Shuttle Makers		2	3		2	
Millwrights			3			
Paper Makers		1			1	2
Quarry Owners					4	1
Railway Waggon Builders						1
Stone Masons, Bricklayers & Builders		6	12	11	8	24
Timber Merchants & Saw Mills	2	3	4	5	6	6
Wheelwrights		6		7	3	5

MINOR INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS

TYPE OF BUSINESS, etc.	Y E A R					
	1816	1822	1837	1852	1862	1872
Blacksmiths		4	5	9	6	8
Boat Builders						2
Basket Makers			2	2	2	3
Boot & Shoe Makers	6	14	18	33	46	62
Braziers & Tin Plate Workers	2	3	5	4	7	8
Brewers etc.		1	3	4	3	9
Brushmakers						3
Cabinet makers & upholsterers	3	4	7	7	13	18
Carvers & Guilders					1	6
Coopers	2	2	4	4	3	5
Goldsmiths, Silversmiths & Jewellers		2				
Gunsmiths		2				
Joiners & Carpenters		14	14	14	17	43
Lime Burners		2	2	2	2	1
Maltsters	4	3	4	2	4	4
Mattress & Bed Makers					1	5
Milliners & Dress Makers	2	3	10	13	16	28
Painters	2	5	7	8	8	10
Bedquilt Manufacturers						1
Plasterers		3	4	3	2	4
Plumbers, Glaziers, etc.	2	5	4	8	9	9
Reed & Heald Makers		1	1		1	1
Rope & Twine Makers	2	2	2	6	4	3
Saddlers	3	3	4	3	4	5
Sewing Machine Makers						4
Slaters & Slate Merchants					2	4
Staymakers			2		8	7
Tanners						3
Tobacco Pipe Makers						1
Turners in Wood, etc.		1	2			
Watch & Clock Makers	3	4	5	5	6	14
Whitesmiths		3	6	4	4	4
Wire Drawers	2	2	2	1	1	1

C O M M E R C I A L E S T A B L I S H M E N T S

TYPE OF BUSINESS	Y E A R					
	1816	1822	1837	1852	1862	1872
Bakers, Confectioners & Flour Dealers	6	20	14	25	14	22
Banks	1	2	4	3	3	4
Baths (Turkish) Proprietors					3	3
Bill Posters						2
Booksellers, Book Binders, Stationers, Printers & Newsagents	3	3	2	6	9	28
Butchers		18	19	17	29	42
Chemists & Druggists	4	4	6	12	16	16
Clothes Brokers		2	4	4	5	7
Coach & Cab Proprietors						5
Corn Factors		5	3	3	3	4
Curriers & Leather Sellers	4	4	5	6	3	7
Fellmongers					1	
Fire & Life Insurance Agents	3	3	8	13	18	28
Fishmongers				2	5	11
Furniture Brokers						10
Furriers			2			
German Yeast Dealers						4
Glass & China Dealers	2	2	3	3	5	9
Greengrocers & Gardeners		3	4	10	13	19
Grocers & Tea Dealers	17	22	18	17	29	36
Hairdressers		5	11	14	12	18
Hatters	3	6	11	8	10	9
Hay & Straw Dealers						4
Hosiers & Smallware Dealers	3	4	3	5	8	17
Hotels, Inns, Taverns, & Beerhouses	3	37	83	78	83	108
Iron & Steel Merchants	2	2	4	3	4	9
Iron Mongers	4	3	3	5	6	7
Pawnbrokers		1		2	4	7
Rag & Bone Dealers			2	4	4	5
Shopkeepers			33	99	101	153
Tailors & Drapers	12	17	23	39	44	65
Tallow Chandlers	2	2	3	4	2	3
Tillage Merchants					1	3
Tobacconists				2	2	6
Toy & Fancy Repositories					6	10
Wine, Spirit, Ale & Porter Merchants		4	2	3	5	12
Yarn Merchants			5	4	4	4

P R O F E S S I O N A L E S T A B L I S H M E N T S

TYPE OF BUSINESS, etc.	Y E A R					
	1816	1822	1837	1852	1862	1872
Academies & Libraries		7	12	13	17	20
Attorneys	5	11	6	6	6	12
Accountants & Estate Agents		3	3	14	15	16
Architects & Surveyors		1	2	5	4	6
Auctioneers & Valuers	2	4	4	5	8	8
Civil & Mining Engineers					2	5
Newspapers					4	3
Pattern Designers			3			
Photographers					3	2
Music Professors & Dealers					5	10
Surgeons & Physicians	3	5	7	10	14	24
Veterinary Surgeons					2	2

Sources: (1) Wardle & Pratt, & James Pigott (Publ.), The Commercial Directory for 1816-17 (Manchester, 1816); (2) Edward Baines, History, Directory & Gazetteer of the County of York, Vol. I West Riding, (Leeds, 1822); (3) William White, History, Gazetteer & Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Vol. I, (Sheffield, 1837); (4) White, Gazetteer & General Directory of Sheffield, etc., (Sheffield, 1852); (5) Francis White & Co., General & Commercial Directory of the Borough of Sheffield, etc. (Sheffield, 1862); (6) Francis White & Co., General & Commercial Directory & Topography of Sheffield, etc. (Sheffield, 1872). The differences between commercial, industrial and professional establishments are clear enough but the distinction between 'major' and 'minor' industrial ones is not clear and, to an extent, it is a matter of personal judgement. In such classification two factors have been taken into account: the importance of the establishment in question to the economy of the town and the possible level of capital investment. Thus under 'major industrial' I have included all the firms in the staple industries of the town and those establishments which were likely to have involved high levels of capital investment and probably employed manpower on comparatively large scales.

The figures from the 1841 and 1851 censuses show that the people engaged in the linen industry were fifty-one per cent and forty-eight per cent, respectively, of the total non-dependant population.²³

Among the major and minor industrial establishments, some served the needs of the linen trade, directly or indirectly: the loom and shuttle makers, the reed and heald makers, the builders or the saw mills. From the late 1830's the town's millwrights, boiler makers and iron founders produced machinery or parts for the steam-powered linen factories. Other small and big industries grew up in response to the general and particular needs of the town's population.

A more remarkable feature which can be observed in Table 1.2 is the rapid expansion of the commercial sector, especially the distributive part of the sector which brought to the growing population the various consumer goods produced within and without the town. Not a few anonymous small traders played an important role on market days. One serious omission which the directories made is the agricultural sector. There was much land, especially outside the 'improvement zone' which was under cultivation: Keresforth, Race Common, Pogmoor and Gawber. The importance of this sector is reflected in the sizeable group of agricultural labourers which appear in the census, especially in the 1841 enumeration list.

It is possible to assess the general industrial structure in 1856 by referring to Table 1.3 which lists the main business establishments with their annual rateable value for the purpose of poor rate assessment. This table, however, is far from complete because, for one thing, it excludes a score of the smaller linen warehouses which, among themselves, employed anything up to half the weaving population.

²³As adjusted to the nearest whole number. For absolute figures and other related information, see below, p. 36f.

TABLE 1.3: The Main Industrial Enterprises in 1856 :

Description of Property	Owner or Occupier	Name or Situation	Rateable Value (£)
Colliery	Hopwood & Co.	Barnsley New Colliery	86
"	Day & Twibell	Mt Osborne Colliery } & Old Mill Colliery }	693
"	Sturges, Paley & Mason	New Gawber Colliery	400
"	Exors of Samuel Thorp	Gawber & Honeywell Collieries	746
"	William Hindle	Pogmoor (1)	24
"	R.W. Parkinson	Pogmoor (2)	22
Linen Factory	Carter Brothers	Town End	274
"	John Birks Pigott	Shaw Mill	398
"	Thomas Taylor & Sons	Shambles Street	737
"	James Marsden	Peel Street	113
"	Richardson, Tee & Rycroft	Pitt Street	274
"	George Russell	Old Mill Lane	145
Linen Warehouse	Jackson & Hodgetts	Church Street	65
"	Wm Harvey & Co.	Market Street	98
"	J. & T. Cordeux	Sheffield Road	70
Bleachworks	H. J. & J. Spencer		128
"	Robert Cruick	Old Mill Lane	62
"	Harvey, Jackson & Co.	Beevor Bleachworks	250
"	Matthew Sykes	Beckett Bleachworks	172

Description of Property	Owner or Occupier	Name or Situation	Rateable Value (£)
Calender	H.J. & J. Spencer	Hope Calender	261
"	Ann Richardson	Union Calender	200
"	Hopwood & Oldroyd	Summer Lane	50
"	John Shaw	Wortley Street	80
Dyehouse	Joseph Smith	Town End	54
"	John Shaw	Wellington Street	39
"	Gill & Waddington	Baker Street	16
"	William Bonson	Barebones	13
"	John Rollin	Pontefract Road	60
"	Thomas Wilson	Old Mill Lane	37
Corn Mill	Barnsley Flour Society	Castlereagh St.	40
"	Lawrence Wilson & Sons	Nr. Beevor Bl. Works	68
"	William Burton	Old Mill Wharf	51
Iron Foundry	Richard Inns	Summer Lane	118
"	John Shaw	Wellington St.	54
"	Barraclough & Co.	May Day Green	34
"	J. & G. Dearden	May Day Green	21
"	Wilson & Co.	Nelson Street	38
Steam Saw Mill	William Little	Old Mill Wharf	94
"	Exors of John Shaw	Market Street	40
Glassworks	James Wragg	Harbro' Hill	116
Waterworks	Barnsley Local Bd. of Health	Barnsley Water Works	200

Description of Property	Owner/Occupier	Name or Situation	Rateable Value (£)
Gasworks	Gas Light & Co.	Barnsley Gasworks	300
Canal	Barnsley Canal Co.	Barnsley Canal	332
"	The River Dearne Co.	Dearne & Dove Canal	140
Railway Station etc.	Lancashire & Yorks Railway Co.	Barnsley Branch Lincs & Yorks Rlw.	229
Railway	South Yorks Railway	Barnsley Branch S.Yorks. Railway	80
Total Rateable Value...			7,522

Source: "Barnsley Poor Rate Assessment, 1855-56" (MS; Barnsley Reference Library) only those establishments of a considerable rateable value are included in the Table. Consequently, the majority of the small workshop premises are omitted. Some important industries, especially the collieries, which were located outside the Poor Assessment zone and which employed a considerable number of the Barnsley workers, are also not included. But the listed businesses together with the unlisted linen handloom manufacturing establishments employed, by far, the majority of the working population.

In spite of this serious omission, the information in the table is quite useful as a tool for analysis.

Three main observations can be made with respect to Table 1.3. Even in 1856, businesses involved in the manufacture and processing of linen products were still predominant, constituting 48 per cent of the total rateable value of the businesses listed in the table. It is pertinent to point out, however, that this conclusion should not be given undue weight because many collieries which provided jobs to so many of the Barnsley workers were situated outside the Barnsley Poor Relief zone and would, therefore, not be listed here. A second important observation is the high degree of variation in the rateable values of businesses in the same industry - a fact which obviously reflects the differences in the scales of operation and, probably, in the size of manpower employed. The third and final observation concerns the location of industry within the town. On the whole most industries were situated outside the main population centres especially on the west around Townend, and in the Old Mill area along the Dearne Valley in the north. But because planned industrial development was not within the purview of the local Improvement Commission, some industries could be found in the major settlement areas.

We need to restate and reformulate the important strands which run through the whole structure of the industrial, commercial and professional enterprises of the town over the period, say from 1816 to 1862. At the beginning of the period the economy was, to all intents and purposes, a monolithic one. Although we have no concrete figures of the number of workers employed in the different industries before 1841, the figures for 1841 show that more than half the working population was involved in the linen trade. The proportion was certainly much higher in the earlier period.

In 1816 there was a conspicuous presence of linen manufacturers, bleachers, calenderers and dyers. In that year, according to Table 1.2, thirty-five out of forty-one, or eighty-five per cent, of the employers in the town's major industries were engaged in the different stages of linen production, especially weaving. The number of the other enterprises, whether industrial or commercial or professional, was very small, in absolute and comparative terms, but managed to increase their share of the activity in the later part of the period. These range from such craft groups as shoe-makers and cabinet makers to commercial establishments like bakers, grocers, drapers, and general shopkeepers. Some increases were due to greater demand; others arose from new technologies. The overwhelming evidence from both the directory lists and the official census records indicates that by the 1860's the town's economy was much more diversified and had moved a long way from the monolithic situation of the period, say from 1810 to 1840. The census figures would show that in 1861 linen weaving and coal mining were still dominating the occupational structure, employing, perhaps, slightly less than half the working population. Nevertheless, the 'non-staple' sector had grown considerably and was progressively enlarging in proportion to the 'staple' sector.

IV. The Making of a Community:

A good starting point for introducing people into the town's historical map is an analysis of the total population figures given in Table 1.4 below. The table includes also calculations of the rates of population increase:

Table 1.4: Population of the Township of Barnsley 1750-1861 :

P O P U L A T I O N				POPULATION INCREASE		
Year	Males	Females	Total	Period	Per cent Increase	Per cent annual rate of Increase
1750	-	-	1740			
1801	1791	1815	3606	1750-1801	107.2	1.5
1811	2578	2436	5014	1801-1811	39.0	3.4
1821	4284	3999	8284	1811-1821	65.2	5.2
1831	5239	5091	10330	1821-1831	24.7	2.2
1841	6191	6119	12310	1831-1841	19.2	1.7
1851	7574	7389	14913	1841-1851	21.1	2.0
1861	8952	8938	17890	1851-1861	20.0	1.8

Sources: Jackson, op.cit., p.45. Census Abstracts (H.M.S.O.), 1801-1861. The figure for 1750 given by Jackson is, of course, not based on official sources, since the census Act was passed later in 1800. Possibly an enumeration was carried out by the clergy or some other local enthusiast: See T.H. Hollingsworth, Historical Demography, (1969), pp.88-9 on this point. I have used the "Compound Interest" formula to calculate the annual rates of population growth, i.e.

$$A = P \left(1 + \frac{r}{100} \right)^n$$

where A equals population at the end of the period; P equals population at the beginning of the period; r equals annual rate of population increase; and n equals the number of years in the period. All the figures are adjusted to one decimal place.

The population statistics as given in Table 1.4 speak for themselves. They reflect a tremendous increase in the population of the town from a mere 1,740 souls in 1750 to a staggering figure of 14,913 a century later in 1851. Obviously the rate of increase was much faster in the first half of the nineteenth century than in the second half of the previous century. Whereas in the period from 1750 to 1800 the population doubled at the annual rate of increase of 1.5 per cent, in the period from 1801 to 1851 it more than quadrupled at the annual rate of growth of 2.9 per cent²⁴ - double the rate in the previous half century. Such a phenomenon cannot but imply profound changes in the social, economic and, possibly, political climate of Barnsley in the first half of the last century. Over the fifty years there were considerable variations between the decades, as the table clearly shows. It was in the first two decades, especially in the second, that Barnsley experienced an extremely fast rate of population increase.

Before going into the possible explanations of the trend, it is helpful, from the point of view of analysis, to compare the Barnsley trend with other comparable situations. Table 1.5 collates the Barnsley rates of population increase with those of England as a whole; the West Riding of Yorkshire as a whole; and the boroughs of Leeds and Knaresborough. Perhaps the inclusion of the latter two in the comparison needs some explaining. Leeds has been quoted as one of the West Riding

²⁴See Table 1.5 below.

Table 1.5 : Comparative rates of population growth in the first half of the 19th century : Barnsley, England, West Riding, Leeds & Knaresborough.

PERIOD	BARNSLEY			ENGLAND			WEST RIDING			LEEDS			KNARESBOROUGH		
	Total Increase %	Annual Rate of Increase %	Total Increase %	Total Increase %	Annual Rate of Increase %	Total Increase %	Total Increase %	Annual Rate of Increase %	Total Increase %	Total Increase %	Annual Rate of Increase %	Total Increase %	Total Increase %	Annual Rate of Increase %	Total Increase %
1801-1811	39.0	3.4	14.4	1.4	1.5	15.9	17.2	1.6	20.6	2.0					
1811-1821	65.2	5.2	18.1	1.6	2.0	22.1	35.2	3.0	31.3	2.8					
1821-1831	24.7	2.2	16.0	1.5	2.0	21.7	47.3	4.0	3.6	0.4					
1831-1841	19.2	1.7	14.6	1.4	1.6	18.2	23.9	2.2	-15.7	-1.7					
1841-1851	21.1	2.0	12.8	1.3	1.4	13.9	14.2	1.4	8.3	0.8					
1801-1851	313.6	2.9	102.6	1.4	1.7	131.7	230.4	2.4	49.7	0.8					

Rates of population growth are calculated from the figures given in :
 Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population Table I. Numbers of the
 Inhabitants in Years 1801, 1821, 1831, 1841, 1851, (H.M.S.O., 1852).
 Again the figures are adjusted to one decimal place.

towns which experienced a very rapid population growth.²⁵ One of its major industries, flax spinning, had strong links with the Barnsley linen trade.²⁶ Knaresborough was not only of comparable size but, like Barnsley, it started off at the beginning of the century with linen manufacturing as its staple trade but, unlike Barnsley, its industry enjoyed no period of great expansion and, in fact, from the 1820's many Knaresborough weavers moved into Barnsley in search of jobs. This explains, at least in part, the near stagnation of Knaresborough's population over the period.²⁷ On the basis of Table 1.5 one can confidently state that, by any standard of comparison, Barnsley experienced an outstandingly rapid increase of its population in the first half of the 19th century. The annual rate of increase of 2.9 per cent was more than double that of England as a whole (1.4 per cent). Whereas, over the fifty years, the overall English population doubled, that of Barnsley more than quadrupled. Of the places listed in Table 1.5 only Leeds came near, and barely near, Barnsley in the rate of population increase.

Any explanation for population changes is essentially multifarious, but there are four primary determinants: birth rates, death rates, immigration and emigration. Economic and scientific changes, social and religious mores are, of course, secondary factors which impinge upon the total situation of demographic change. But in this study we have to

²⁵ See Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities (Penguin ed., 1968), p.139 et passim.

²⁶ See Chapter Two, Section I, infra.

²⁷ Arthur Redford, Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850 (2nd ed., Manchester, 1964), p.51.

confine our attention to the vital strands of demographic history. The rate of population increase due to the excess of births over deaths is the natural rate of increase, so called to differentiate it from that rate of increase due to net immigration. It is my contention that, whereas the natural rate of population increase was considerable, net immigration is the sole explanation for Barnsley's rate of population growth being so much above average even in comparison with other rapidly rising urban areas. In this connection, her staple trade, linen manufacture, was the central force in determining the town's demographic trend.

Linen yarn was more cheaply and more readily available next door in Leeds where power spinning had begun at the end of the eighteenth century. From about 1810 the enterprising Barnsley manufacturers started investing in fine linen products which enjoyed a good market. In response to the consequent demand for labour, hand-loom weavers displaced in many parts of Lancashire and in some parts of Ireland, especially Drogheda, agricultural labourers from the neighbouring district and, after the Napoleonic wars, returning soldiers, all inundated the town. It was this stream of labour immigration that constituted the greatest single factor in the population growth, especially between 1800 and the 1830's. By and large, the population trend bore some relationship to the performance of the linen trade over the decades.²⁸

That the bulk of the population increase was due to net immigration is difficult to prove statistically. The pre-1851 census data do not indicate the people's places of birth. Any evidence has to be either literary or a mathematical manipulation of the census and extracensus

²⁸ See Redford, op.cit. pp.50-51. For details concerning the development of the linen trade see Chapter Two below. The rise of coal mining appears to have offset what would otherwise have been a fall in the rate of population growth due to the decline of linen hand-loom weaving after 1840.

figures. The parish baptismal and burial registers would not be of much help mainly because of the town's strong non-conformist element.²⁹ But there are some other useful indicators. A general opinion prevails in historical demography that a population growth of 3 per cent or more can only be accounted for by heavy immigration.³⁰ As Table 1.4 clearly shows, the annual rate between 1801 and 1821 was well above this figure. There were variations in the natural rates of population increase between localities.³¹ However, they were incapable of producing such dramatic differences as the ones which we are attending to here, which could only be explained by net immigration. We can, therefore, for the sake of trying to estimate the degree of net migration into the town, equate the Barnsley annual rate of natural population growth between 1801 and 1851 with the overall annual rate of population increase in England as a whole, (i.e. 1.4%). The difference between this rate and the actual Barnsley rate of 2.9% could be assumed to have been the annual rate of population increase due to net immigration into Barnsley, (i.e. 1.5%).³²

²⁹ For the problems involved in the use of parish registers see Hollingsworth, op.cit., p.142; W.A. Armstrong, "The Demographic structure of an English county town: York 1801-51" (mimeo. Urban History Conference, University of Leicester, April 1st, 1973).

³⁰ Hollingsworth, op.cit., p.97; the word heavy appears in the text but the emphasis is mine.

³¹ E.A. Wrigley, Population and History, (1969), p.175.

³² Suggestion for this technique is made by Armstrong, op.cit., p.5. The technique, however, understates the rate of population increase attributable to net immigration because it ignores immigration into England mainly from Scotland and, especially, Ireland.

It would be presumptuous to claim that this is the accurate figure, but it is a very useful index. The net migration figure naturally understates the extent of total immigration in a given period.³³ The movement of people into and out of the town between the census years was quite considerable, mainly in accordance with the vicissitudes of the linen trade.

The claim that labour migration was a major contributory factor to population growth is corroborated by independent literary evidence. During the disturbances of 1816-20 employers and local magistrates usually complained that the immigrant weavers from Lancashire stirred up rebellion among the lower orders - a claim which had some justification because many of the leading Barnsley insurgents in 1820 had originally lived in Lancashire.³⁴ The bulk of the Barnsley overseers' correspondence after 1810 was with their counterparts in Lancashire who owed them money spent on maintaining the paupers from the Lancashire parishes. One Wigan overseer expressed concern about this state of affairs. Writing to the Barnsley overseers he implored:

I beg you will oblige by endeavouring to keep Wigan paupers who reside in your Township at the greatest distance imaginable. I fear your account will accumulate till we shall not be able to discharge it. I am of opinion that things are as bad here as they can possibly be with you at Barnsley. ... I am sorry that you have very much trouble with our poor. 35

Irish immigration was also quite considerable, and Irish linen weavers constituted a sizeable proportion of the weaving community. By the 1820's they were emerging as a conspicuous group. In the census of 1841 there

³³ See Louis Chevalier, Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris During the first half of the 19th century, (trans. by Frank Jellinek, 1973), p.226.

³⁴ This point is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight, pp.448f.

³⁵ "Barnsley Overseers Letter Book, Vol. I, 1804-38" (MS.,B.R.L.), p.20. The letter is dated 16th September, 1816.

were 617 Irish-born individuals in Barnsley, constituting 5 per cent of the town's total population. In the 1851 census they were 689 or 4.8 per cent of the population.³⁶ These figures understate the Irish factor for two reasons: They leave out those people who were born in Barnsley or other parts of England but who were culturally and temperamentally Irish because of their family connections. If they were to be included, the figures would probably more than treble. Secondly, the aggregate figures overlook the fact that most of these Irish immigrants were concentrated in predominantly working-class areas of the town, a factor which had important social implications. The first impression which one takes to the 1841 census schedules is that up to 80 per cent of the Irish lived on eight out of a total of a hundred and ten streets. These streets were: Wilson Street, George Street, Thomas Street, Joseph Street, Wood Street, Market Street, Dawson Wall, and Copper Street.³⁷ Seven of them were in the Wilson's Piece area, occupied almost exclusively by hand-loom weavers and their families.

To get a general idea of the origins of the Barnsley labouring population, I have selected from the 1851 census schedules five predominantly working-class streets and classified their residents according to their places of birth under three categories, as shown in Table 1.6: those born in Barnsley, those born in other areas of Yorkshire, and those born outside Yorkshire. It would be misleading to suppose that the people's places of birth indicated in the census schedules were the places in which they lived just before coming into Barnsley. The value of the records, however, lies in the fact that they indicate the direction of the movements. Two important

³⁶ Compiled from census schedules: 1841, P.R.O., H.0107/1325; 1851, H.O.107/2332. For Irish immigration into England in early 19th century, see Redford op.cit. ch.8.

³⁷ P.R.O., H.O.107/1325 and H.O.107/2332.

Table 1.6: Places of birth in selected working-class streets.

STREET	Born in Barnsley		Born in Yorks.		Born outside Yorks.	
	No. of people	% of str. total	No. of people	% of str. total	No. of people	% of str. total
Croft Ends	165	65%	51	20%	37	15%
Dawson Wall	131	51%	54	21%	71	28%
Copper St.	149	65%	54	23%	28	12%
Union Row	199	66%	74	24%	30	10%
Baker St.	135	46%	59	20%	100	34%

observations can be made from the table. First, that more than half (60 per cent on average) of the selected population was born in Barnsley. This is the case in all the streets but one. Secondly, half of the immigrants originated from within Yorkshire, especially, (as the census enumerators' lists show), in the immediate neighbourhood of Barnsley.

More often than not the majority of those who moved into the town in search of work were male heads of families, some of whom increased the size of their families after they had settled in Barnsley. The picture which emerges from a Table 1.6 type of analysis as applied to heads of families, is entirely different, as Table 1.7 shows. In all the five streets more than half of the heads of families were born outside Barnsley. Croft Ends, with the highest proportion of locally born heads of families, had only 46 per cent of them; in Dawson Wall the proportion was as low as a third. If it were possible to make a similar analysis of the 1821 and 1831 censuses, the results would show a much bigger proportion of heads of families (or even individuals) born outside Barnsley. This small but carefully selected sample would strongly indicate that the

Table 1.7: Places of birth of heads of families in selected streets.

STREET	Born in Barnsley		Born elsewhere in Yorks.		Born outside Yorks.	
	number	% of st.	number	% of street	number	% of st.
Croft Ends	22	46%	14	29%	12	25%
Dawson Wall	14	31%	12	27%	19	42%
Copper Str.	14	35%	18	45%	8	20%
Union Row	18	43%	17	40%	7	17%
Baker Str.	21	41%	10	20%	20	39%

Compiled from the 1851 census schedules, P.R.O.,
H.O.107/2332.

Barnsley labouring population had diverse geographical and (if we consider the Irish and the Scots), cultural origins.³⁸

What did they do? A breakdown of the occupations of all the non-dependant population, as recorded in the 1841 census, shows that the linen industry engaged the majority of them. This is clearly illustrated by the statistics in Table 1.8. The figures show that a total of 50.6 per cent of all the town's non-dependant population were directly involved in the linen trade. A breakdown of only the subordinate, wage-earning occupations gives an even bigger proportion of workers in the linen trade - 57.4 per cent, as shown in Table 1.9.

Table 1.8: Occupational Structure of Barnsley in 1841

	Linen weavers	Other linen workers	Linen Manuf'rs	Mine-workers	Other occpns	Traders,prof-essions,Indep.	Total
Number	2,303	329	43	223	1,735	645	5,278
Per cent	43.6%	6.2%	0.8%	4.2%	32.9%	12.3%	100%

³⁸ For a more general picture in England, see Redford, *op.cit.* CHS III & IV. For comparison, see R. Lawson, "Population Movements in the West Midlands, 1841-1861", *Geography* (1959) pp.164-177.

Table 1.9: Subordinate wage-earning labour in 1841

	Linen weavers	Other Linen workers	Mineworkers	Other occupations	Total
Number	2,303	329	223	1,735	4,590
Per cent	50.2%	7.2%	4.8%	37.8%	100%

Note on Tables 1.8 and 1.9

Based on the 1841 enumerators' returns, P.R.O., H.O.107/1325. Under 'other occupations' fall all categories of wage-earning labour other than that in the mining and linen industries. The figure almost certainly includes some employers, owing to the ambiguity of the census records. The term 'blacksmith', for example, could mean either master-blacksmith, employing labour, or simply a wage-earning hand employed in the master's workshop. Where it is not specified, I have put it under this category. 'Other linen workers' mean those employed in linen bleachworks, dyeworks, calenders and warehouses. The records are inadequate for the purpose of distinguishing between 'skilled' and 'unskilled' labour. The category of 'traders, professionals, independent, etc.' includes all employers other than the linen manufacturers; all traders; all self-employed persons; all master-craftsmen; all 'gentlemen'; and all those in the professions, like lawyers, teachers, surgeons, clerks, and the clergy. Most of them constituted what one might loosely term as the town's lower middle class. This categorization is far from satisfactory. There was, of course, great diversity among them; for here a prominent master builder employing a score of hands is lumped together with a slum publican who was culturally and temperamentally (if not materially) closer to the hand-loom weavers in his residential neighbourhood. The classification, however, gives a sound and useful general idea of the town's occupational pattern.

These proportions, showing the dominance of those who depended directly on the linen trade are an understatement of the actual situation. Under 'other occupations' were domestic servants some of whom worked for linen manufacturers or well-off master weavers. Some manufacturers had as many as three or four servants. Also, under this category were those recorded as 'labourers' some of whom might have worked in linen warehouses,

or been involved in the transportation of linen yarn. Many women and children who were recorded as dependants most probably helped at home to wind the yarn and even to weave the cloth. Finally, as we have seen earlier, many commercial and industrial establishments depended, directly or indirectly, on the performance of the linen trade. Bakers, shopkeepers, butchers, publicans, and the like were adversely affected by falling wages or strikes in the linen trade, which employed the bulk of their customers. All told, probably 80 per cent or more relied on the linen industry in one way or another.

By the mid 1850's, however, the situation was changing, and changing rapidly, owing to the development of the mining industry. The mineworkers were, both in numbers and in economic strength, rising rapidly. The situation is best illustrated by a comparison of the census figures of 1841 with those of 1861 in Table 1.10.

Table 1.10: Workers in the linen and mining industries: their relative proportions.

	Linen weavers	Other linen workers	Mineworkers	Total
1841 No.	2,303	329	223	2,855
%	80.7%	11.5%	7.8%	100%
1861 No.	1,988	315	1,007	3,310
%	60.1%	9.5%	30.4%	100.0%

Compiled from the census schedules, 1841: H.O.107/1325;
1861: P.R.O., R.O.9/443-447.

In 1841 mineworkers constituted only 7.9 per cent of the total of all the mineworkers and linen workers living in the township area. By 1861 the figure had risen to 30.4 per cent. That of the linen workers, however, had dropped from 92.1 per cent to 69.6 per cent. Whereas in those twenty years the number of mineworkers increased by 352 per cent, that of the linen weavers dropped by 14 per cent. In absolute terms this drop may seem small but in comparative terms it was phenomenal. In 1841 the proportion of linen weavers to mineworkers was ten to one. In 1861, it was less than two to one!

In the light of these figures, a meaningful labour history of Barnsley has to focus on the two groups: the linen weavers and the mineworkers. The former were predominant throughout the period of this study, and the latter were becoming increasingly strong and important towards the end of the period. The other groups of workers were so many and so diverse that a meaningful study of their economic and social situations is not humanly possible. The outstanding groups under the all-embracing title of 'other occupations' were: agricultural labourers, general labourers, domestic servants, railway labourers, building workers, errand boys, craftsmen of all sorts, shop assistants and the like. News of how these small trades and occupations fared was overshadowed by the events in the staple industries and, in any case, the prosperity or misery of the town as a whole depended on the condition of the giant industries: linen and, later on, mining.

At one level there was a mirage of an undivided community in town life which concealed a deep contradiction within it. In so far as the Barnsley inhabitants lived in the same place and consequently shared certain common experiences and a considerable degree of interdependence, they constituted one community. This was true in spite of, in some cases even because of, their different occupational and social roles. The employers and the employees made mutually beneficial contacts in the labour market; the traders and their customers needed each other in the commodity market. They were all subordinates under the same state institutions, though, in some respects, they played different roles. They belonged to the same religious organizations and prayed under the same roof on the Lord's day. They participated together in many local events: in the markets and fairs, in the religious and civil festivities, and, on rare occasions, even in voicing their special local grievances. The official annual Barnsley feast, dating back to 1583, and falling in the third week of August, was everyone's occasion to rejoice. For all the residents, masters and men alike, "the week was spent in harmony and conviviality."³⁹ On Coronation Day, September 8, 1831, the inhabitants of Barnsley, with all the paraphernalia appropriate to the occasion, held a massive procession to express their loyalty to the Crown. The procession, which paraded the major streets of the town, was led by four constables who carried staves, followed by the Churchwardens and the Overseers on horseback. Then followed, on foot, the yeomanry, the pensioners and a band of music. Next came the clergy and gentry on horse-back who were followed by members of the Society of Orangemen, the Society of Oddfellows and the rest of the town's public. The Deputy Constable, on horse-back, side by side with a fully rigged man-of-war (in miniature, of course), with a calmly boy standing on the quarter deck, brought up the rear. After the procession, the inhabitants partook of a sumptuous feast. On Market Hill over two thousand men were provided with dinner, while their women drank tea and their children ate buns and drank sweetened ale. The

inhabitants, rich and poor, had contributed money to celebrate the royal occasion.⁴⁰ On February 12, 1833 all the town's shops and warehouses closed; the men, women and children, whatever their social stations, attended services held in all the churches and chapels to thank the Lord for having stopped the deadly hand of cholera morbus which had brought bereavement upon the town.⁴¹ One could quote many other such occasions which attracted attendance from all social and economic strata.⁴² In these and many similar ways the Barnsley people constituted one community. But to the extent that they played different roles and, consequently, had varying economic and social experiences, they were more than one community. Beneath the veneer of oneness was the stark reality: a stratified conglomeration of unequal people; communities in a community. The economic and political inequalities will increasingly become obvious as this study unfolds. But there were two areas, illustrative of the social inequality which deserve full examination at this stage. These were: the residential segregation of the social classes and the concentration of the ownership of landed and housing property into a few hands.

From an analysis of the 1841 census schedules there emerges a residential pattern which is indicative of a considerable socio-spatial segregation. Most of the linen weavers lived in the southern part of the town, especially in and around Wilson's Piece.⁴³ Most of those in the

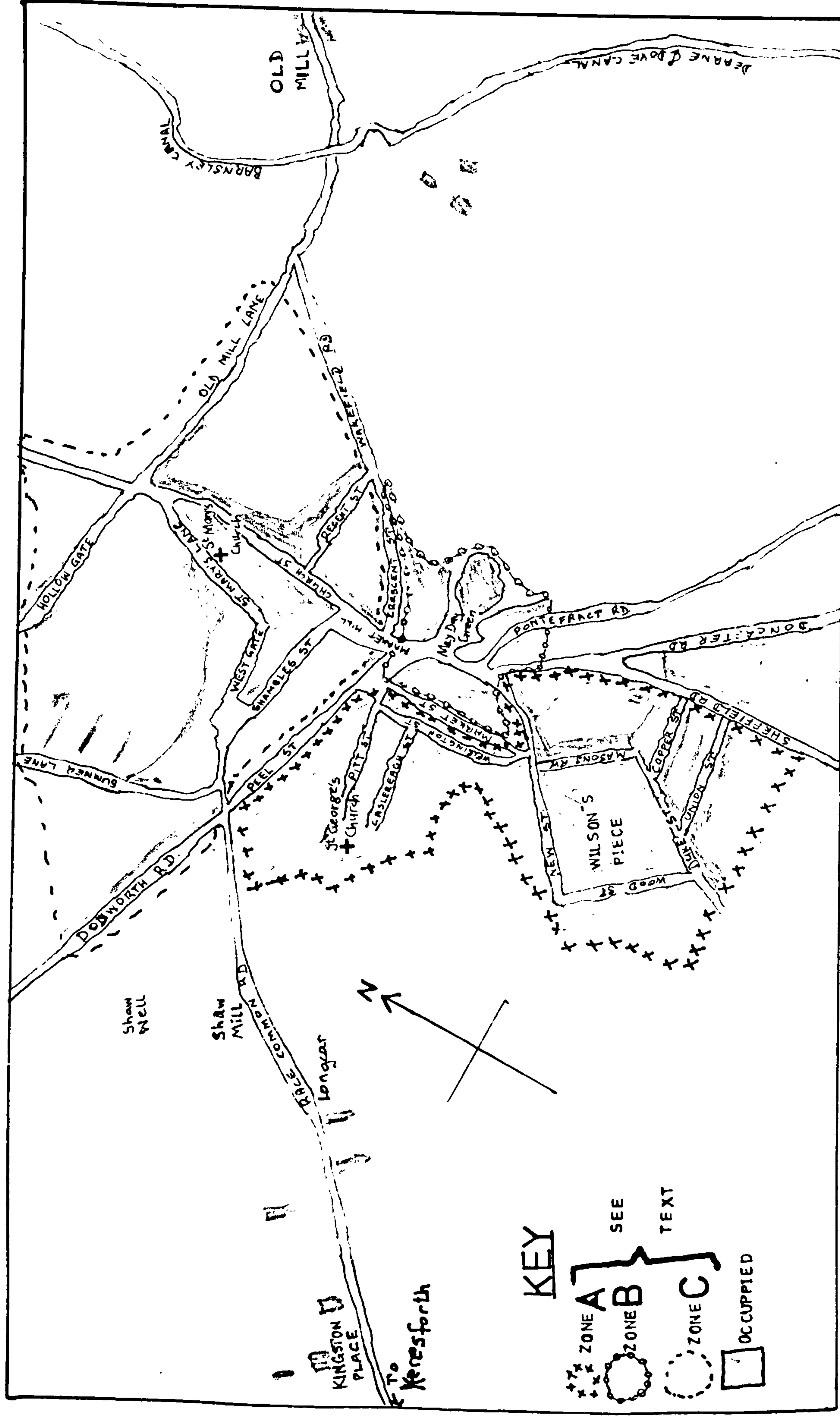
³⁹ Ned Nut (pseud.), The Barnsley and Village Record, or The Book of facts and fancies, (Barnsley, 1839), p.34.

⁴⁰ The Leeds Mercury, Sept.10, 1831, p.3.

⁴¹ Ibid., Feb.16, 1833.

⁴² A Leeds paper carried an excellent description of a meeting held in Barnsley on April 8, 1829 to protest against Catholic Emancipation. It was attended by a cross-section of the local community: Leeds Intelligencer, April 16, 1829, p.3.

⁴³ Marked 'A' on Map Number 6.



MAP NO.6 SOCIO-SPATIAL SEGREGATION.- EARLY 19th CENTURY.

commercial sector, the shopkeepers in particular, tended to concentrate in what is now, and was then, the main shopping area - around May Day Green, Market Place and Queen Street.⁴⁴ The town's prominent manufacturers, professionals, and merchants resided mainly in the northern section around St. Mary's Church - on Church Street, St. Mary's Lane, St. George's Street, Lancaster Gate, School Street, Regent Street and the neighbourhood.⁴⁵ This was, of course, the general tendency; otherwise there was a fair intermingling of the social classes and occupational groups all over the town, imposed among other things, by the nature of property ownership. In a few cases a linen manufacturer who owned a piece of land would erect on that land his own house, warehouse and, in some cases, a row of cottages which he let to his own weavers. But in time the process of suburbanization gained momentum. In the 1861 census we find that Keresforth Hill, which during the 1841 census had been hardly occupied, was now the home of those who had made it. Five prominent families lived here: Henry Spencer, linen manufacturer bleacher; Alice Spencer, widow property owner; James Bridges, farmer of 118 acres; Edward Joly farmer of 118 acres as well; and Charles Bailey, farmer of 45 acres. By 1871 another residential suburb, Dodworth Road, had developed. It was occupied by people like Alexander Paterson, editor of the Barnsley Chronicle, John Spencer, Henry Spencer, John Temple, John Carter, John White, all of them prominent linen manufacturers.⁴⁶ Other suburbs like Huddersfield Road, Victoria Street, or Sackville Street also sprang up.

⁴⁴Marked 'B' on the map.

⁴⁵ Marked 'C' on the map.

⁴⁶ P.R.O.: H.O.107/1325; R.G.9/443-447 & R.G.10/4644-4648.

Table 1.11: A sample of the residential pattern in 1841

CATEGORY AREA, OR ZONE	STREET	WAGE EARNERS			EMPLOYERS, INDEPENDENT, ETC.		
		Linen weavers	Other linen wkrs.	Other occpsns.	Linen Manfs.	Profes- sions	Traders masters etc.
A	Zone Total	382	16	34	0	0	1
	John St.	54	3	13	-	-	-
	Joseph St.	144	-	10	-	-	-
	Thomas St.	49	1	5	-	-	1
	Taylor's Rv	135	12	6	-	-	-
	Zone percent- age	88.2%	3.7%	7.9%	0%	0%	0.2%
B	Zone Total	8	3	108	1	5	88
	May Day Grn	6	3	36	1	1	21
	Market Place	-	-	7	-	2	10
	Queen St.	-	-	15	-	2	15
	Cheap Side	2	-	50	-	-	42
	Zone percent- age	3.8%	1.4%	50.7%	0.5%	2.3%	41.3%
C	Zone Total	61	53	277	9	35	112
	St.Geo's Pl.	5	9	15	2	-	9
	Shambles St.	33	24	125	6	10	59
	Church St.	23	14	126	1	22	38
	St.Mary's St.	-	6	11	-	3	6
	Zone percent- age	11.2%	9.7%	50.6%	1.6%	6.4%	20.5%

Compiled from P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

A representative sample of four streets from each of the three main zones or category areas (A,B, & C) in Map Number 6 will illustrate the 'class bias' in the town's residential structure. The figures which appear in Table 1.11 are compiled from the census of 1841. Note the heavy concentration of weavers in zone 'A' and a high proportion of traders, small masters and so on in zone 'B'. In the 'C' category area there was a considerable number of people under 'other occupations', a factor which would seem to weaken the alleged concentration here of the upper echelons of the community, the main industrial, merchant and professional groups. A good many of those in 'other occupations' in this zone, however, were domestic servants, living and working in the households of the manufacturers, professionals, merchants and so on. In Church Street, for example, there was a total of 57 domestic servants constituting about half of the 'other occupations' category in the street. Overall, there was a conspicuous presence of what has been termed as a "geographical caste system."⁴⁷

The group of individuals and families who controlled building land consisted of people of varying fame and power. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the details of the Enclosure award of 1777. The Lord of the Manor got 69 acres and "a seventh of the whole of the commons in lieu of tithes and one-sixteenth of the soil." Then followed a group of twelve or so members of the aristocracy and gentry who got between 10 and 35 acres each - people like the Earl of Strafford, Sir William Wake, Walter Spencer Stanhope, Samuel Thorp, Joseph Beckett, Henry Wood,

⁴⁷ See James E. Vance, "Housing and the Worker: Determinative and Contingent Ties in Nineteenth century Birmingham," Economic Geography, Vol.43, No.2, (April 1967) p.126.

Francis Edmunds, John Wilson and Thomas Taylor. The rest of the beneficiaries, about ninety of them, got hardly more than an acre each.⁴⁸ The enclosure award operated in the true spirit of the biblical adage, for it was to those who were already possessed of considerable amounts of land that more was given. Some of the landholders like Joseph Beckett, Samuel Thorp and Thomas Taylor held on to their land and developed it themselves. Others, like the Duke of Leeds, Lord of the Manor, sold or leased some of it to property developers.

As we saw earlier, the rapid industrial development of Barnsley was coupled with an equally rapid rise in the construction of dwelling houses. But the control of this asset, like the control of other economic assets vital to the very subsistence of every working man, was held by a few men, each of whom owned a chunk of the town. In 1844, for example, thirty landlords listed in Table 1.12 owned about half of the town's total dwellings.

Most of the landlords were prominent not merely in property ownership but in many other things as well. Twelve were linen manufacturers, two were coal masters and thirteen were in commercial or professional occupations.⁴⁹ Twenty-two of them were on the local Improvement Commission, perhaps the most influential, and certainly the most controversial, statutory body in the town.⁵⁰ Also, no less than twelve of these landlords were named in the 1821 Act as some of the original shareholders in the Barnsley Gas Company.⁵¹ Some names were particularly outstanding

⁴⁸ Jos. Wilkinson, "Barnsley Diary of Dates" (MS & cuttings, B.R.L.), pp.82-6.

⁴⁹ White's Directory. (1837 & 1852).

⁵⁰ Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Improvement Commissioners Borough etc." (MS & cuttings, B.R.L.). See also Chapter Five, Section II.

⁵¹ See 1 & 2 Geo.IV. Cap.75, "An Act for Lighting the Town of Barnsley, in the West Riding of the County of York with Gas."

Table 1.12 : The major property owners in Barnsley, 1844.

Landlord	No. of Houses	Landlord	No. of Houses
1. Mence	103	16. Richardson	25
2. Taylor	83	17. Travis	24
3. Beckett	80	18. Micklethwait	24
4. Clarke	65	19. Hopwood	22
5. Wilkinson	59	20. Leadman	22
6. Jackson	49	21. Masters	21
7. Young	45	22. Stocks	21
8. Mason	41	23. Winter	20
9. Balque	41	24. Sheperd	19
10. Lister	38	25. Thorp	19
11. Senior	35	26. Thornton	18
12. Greaves	34	27. Raywood	15
13. Liddal	32	28. Parkin	13
14. Cordeux	29	29. Sykes	12
15. Coward	26	30. Frudd	10
Total Number of Houses.....1,045			

Compiled from "Lighting, Watching & Improvement Rate",
1844." (MS. B.R.L.)

as the following will illustrate: William Cookes Mence, son of the Rev. Benjamin Mence, former incumbent of St. Mary's parish church, was a well known local solicitor who also acted as clerk to the magistrates, to the Improvement Commissioners and to the trustees of the church. John Beckett, banker and linen bleacher, belonged to a prominent local family about whom local historian, Joseph Wilkinson, had the following

to say :

If any improvement wanted making; if trustees were to be appointed to any of our local charities, or any inquiry had to be made into their administration; if any movement was set on foot to relieve the poor in times of distress, or the promotion of any other public object was taken in hand, we always find the name of Beckett associated with it. 52

John Beckett's father, Joseph, a linen manufacturer and bleacher, was styled as 'the father of the Barnsley linen trade'. He opened the first local bank at the end of the 18th century. In 1822 he was appointed Barnsley's first resident magistrate for many years, and later became a Deputy Lieutenant of the West Riding. For about fifteen years he acted as chairman of the local Improvement Commissioners. The Becketts owned about 176 acres in Barnsley.⁵³ Thomas Taylor operated the largest linen firm, one of the first to introduce power-looms. By 1850 he was employing more than 500 hands. He was appointed county magistrate in 1846. His biggest estate, Taylor's Row, consisted of 53 weavers' cottages. William Hopwood was an enterprising businessman: a coal master, corn miller, and linen calenderer. He also acted as churchwarden. Richard Thorp who owned 19 of the 31 houses in Old Town came from an old coal-owning family in Barnsley and operated no less than three coal mines at the time. The Lister family was probably one of the oldest linen houses in Barnsley. Henry Richardson, prominent linen manufacturer was Barnsley's first mayor in 1869. John and Thomas Cordeux, who owned all the 13 houses on Cordeux Row and all the 16 houses on Cordeux Square, were successful linen

⁵² Joseph Wilkinson, Worthies, Families and Celebrities of Barnsley and the District, Vol.I, (1883), p.63.

⁵³ P.P. 1874, Vol.LXXII: Return of Owners of Land, p.670.

manufacturers. Such people, together with a few others, numbering, perhaps, no more than fifty of them, constituted the elite of the town. Apart from controlling jobs and housing, they had a firm grip on other local affairs: town improvement, gas lighting, water supply, poor relief, law and order, church affairs and, to some extent, education.

That housing was under the control of only a few people is reflected by the low level of home-ownership over our period. In 1847 out of a total of 2,100 occupied houses in the Improvement Zone of the chapelry only 142 of them were owner-occupied. The remaining 1,958 were either leased or, in most of the cases, rented. Looked at in another way, out of every hundred homes, only seven were owner occupied.⁵⁴ A complicating factor of some interest is that there were tenanted householders, living in style in healthier areas but who themselves owned houses in other parts of the town, especially in predominantly working class areas. Thus, linen magnate Thomas Taylor, who owned the whole of Taylor's Row, occupied a house, coach-house and stable on Church Street belonging to John Beckett. Coal owner Richard Thorp, who owned nearly the whole of Old Town, rented a house, stable and garden owned by Richardson on Church Street. And Richardson himself, who owned 25 houses, was a tenant of Edward Newman in Longcar Hall. Such families, however, were too few to significantly influence the general pattern.

In the predominantly working class areas the proportion of owner-occupied property was much lower than that of the town as a whole. I have

⁵⁴ Compiled and calculated from lists in "Barnsley Lighting and Watching Rate, 1847" (MS., B.R.L.).

Table 1.13 : Home-ownership in a predominantly working-class district, 1847:

STREET, etc.	OWNER-OCCUPIED	TENANT-OCCUPIED	PERCENTAGE HOME-OWNERSHIP
Beckett Square	-	39	0%
Copper Street	-	39	0%
Cordeux Row	-	14	0%
John Street	-	36	0%
Joseph Street	-	27	0%
Park Row	-	17	0%
Raywood's Row	-	9	0%
Taylor's Row	-	29	0%
Union Row	-	34	0%
Wood Street	-	19	0%
Heelis Street	1	52	2%
Wilson Street	1	54	2%
Baker Street	2	51	4%
Blucher Street	2	31	6%
New Street	9	139	6%
Thomas Street	2	32	6%
Pall Mall	1	14	7%
Barebones	5	54	8%
Crow Well Hill	4	42	9%
Croft Ends	4	20	17%
All the 20 Streets	31	752	4%

Compiled from "Barnsley Lighting & Watching Rate, 1847" (MS., B.R.L.). The percentage figures are corrected to the nearest whole number.

selected and analysed twenty of the most populous streets in the southern section of the town, comprising most of Wilson's Piece and the surrounding area. This small area contained perhaps from 30 to 40 per cent of the total population. The results of the analysis are printed in Table 1.13. Out of a total of 783 occupied houses, only 31, or four out of every hundred, were owner-occupied, a very low figure if compared with the seven

out of every hundred for the town as a whole. In half of the streets no single home was owner-occupied. Most of these homes were long rows of weavers' cottages belonging to individuals like Mence, Taylor, Beckett, Mason, Raywood and Lindley.⁵⁵ In the northern sector, the traditional abode of the well-to-do, the situation was considerably different as Table 1.14 will illustrate. The figure for this sector of the town still reflects an abysmally low proportion of owner-occupation but, at 10 per cent, it is far above the 7 per cent town average.

Table 1.14: Home-ownership in a largely middle-class district, 1847.

STREET, etc.	OWNER-OCCUPIED	TENANT-OCCUPIED	PROPORTION OF HOME-OWNERSHIP %
Church Lane	-	7	0%
Roper Street	-	14	0%
St.Mary's Gate	-	8	0%
St.Mary's Place	-	4	0%
West Gate	2	59	3%
Pinfold Hill	2	46	4%
Old Mill Lane	2	31	6%
High Street	2	26	7%
East Gate	1	12	8%
Church Street	7	71	9%
Shambles Street	8	75	10%
North Pavement	2	17	11%
Rich Lane	2	12	14%
Market Place	4	23	15%
School Street	4	21	16%
Church Field	2	9	18%
Regent Street	3	8	27%
Cockerham Road	2	5	29%
Hollow Gate	1	1	50%
Coal Pit Hill	4	3	57%
All the 20 Streets	48	452	10%

Compiled from "Barnsley Lighting, & Watching Rate, 1847"
(MS., B.R.L.)

⁵⁵ "Barnsley Lighting and Watching Rate, 1847" (M.S., B.R.L.)

There also existed a wide 'quality gap' between the housing occupied by the richer townsmen in the north and that inhabited by the poor lot, not a few of whom lived in overcrowded conditions in the infamous Wilson's Piece. The relative average rateable values of the dwelling houses in the two sectors clearly establishes this fact. Whereas in 1847 the mean annual rateable value of the dwellings in Wilson's Piece and neighbourhood, most of them back-to-back weavers' cottages, was only £4, that for the houses in the north around Church Street, was as high as £12.⁵⁶ From the descriptions in the rate books, many homes in the latter zone were commodious and afforded space for lawns, gardens or coach-houses.

The overwhelming evidence presented above goes a long way to illustrate the point that the so-called Barnsley community was manifestly a pyramid of communities, unequally placed in their economic and social stations and, as this study will increasingly reveal, in the dynamic process of their relationships to one another. At the top was a small but highly influential coterie of land-owners, property-owners, employers and top professionals,

⁵⁶ Calculated from Ibid. Unoccupied houses have been excluded from the calculations as their emptiness had a downward effect on their rateable values. Excluded from the comparative are also scores of premises which served a dual purpose - i.e. those used for dwelling as well as for business or workshop purposes. Such premises had a much higher rateable value than buildings of comparable size and quality used merely as dwelling houses. The mean annual rateable value of those houses in the north which were occupied exclusively by employers and businessmen was much higher than the £12 average for the whole zone (there were sizeable pockets of working-class dwellings here too). A rough estimate from the same source reflects a figure of about £40.

many of whom were, more often than not, most or all of these things at one and the same time. Not only did they dominate the things that mattered for the physical survival of the labouring masses, but they assumed control of the local institutions and became, in effect, the town's chief social engineers. They usually lived in the more attractive and salubrious parts of the town. Somewhere in the middle was a hardly definable penumbra of small masters, businessmen, independent and semi-professional persons who were not so badly off but who, in the very nature of things, were more vulnerable to adverse economic conditions than their betters. The line between them and those below was blurred. At the expansive base of the social pyramid was the mass of wage earning (and a few self-employed) workers and their families who invariably played the subservient role and occupied the receiving end. Though not a uniform whole, they had many things in common. They owned no land, no homes, in the majority of cases no working tools,⁵⁷ and took no part in the running of the town's affairs - except if it be coming out to protest against their grievances, usually at the risk of apprehension. Most of them lived in the dirtier and overcrowded zones of the town which were not conducive to good health. Objectively, therefore, (and subjectively, as the second part of this study will show) they were a community in themselves. To return to our original point, the town as a social community was "incomplete."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ All the apprentices and journeymen plus some first hand (or master) weavers did not own the looms which they used. Almost all the weavers had to rent the more expensive weaving equipment like reeds and gears. For details see Chapter Two below.

⁵⁸ See John Foster, "Nineteenth Century Towns - A Class Dimension," in Dyos, op.cit., p.282 et passim.

Up to this stage it still seems to be the case that our concept of a community is negatively defined. The labouring community has so far been presented in terms of its social and economic deprivation. Was it a community or merely a "social stratum"? A community implies not just objective factors such as the ones we have been looking at but also a dynamic relationship, subjectively perceived and overtly expressed. In the rest of this study, especially in Part II, our definition of a social community, which increasingly assumed the attributes of a social class, will be further strengthened.

V. The Development of Institutions:

Over the period the town evolved an institutional structure that transcended the economic relationships which have hitherto dominated the discussion. The main non-economic institutions can be divided into three broad categories: administrative and political, religious, and educational. It hardly need be mentioned that all three, together with the economic sector, constantly ran into each other.

In the hierarchy of county local government Barnsley was a chapelry in the parish of Silkstone. The parish was part of the Wapentake of Staincross in the West Riding of Yorkshire. By the beginning of our period Barnsley

was, for all practical purposes, administered as a parish, independent of the vicar of Silkstone, with its own independent churchwardens, constables and overseers of the poor. The main authority was vested in the county Justices of the Peace in charge of the Wapentake of Staincross, which constituted a petty sessional division. Not only did they control the machinery of law and order, but made, or sanctioned, all the parish appointments and, in the usual paternalistic fashion of early 19th century amateur government, assumed responsibility for the general welfare of the populace. Inasmuch as the other county magistrates outside the Wapentake sat on the quarter sessions and decided on matters and cases which had a bearing on the people of Barnsley, they exercised a degree of authority on the town.

The majority of the magistrates in charge of Barnsley actually lived outside the town. In fact between, say 1805 and 1850, only two magisterial appointments out of a total of twelve went to the residents of Barnsley. The first was Joseph Beckett appointed in 1822, and the second was Thomas Taylor appointed in 1846. As in all parts of England, the magistracy was dominated by the landed aristocracy and gentry and the Anglican clergy. A list of the magistrates with direct responsibility for Barnsley from 1805 to 1850 clearly illustrates the point. The Rev. Stuart Corbett, D.D., appointed in 1805 lived in Wortley, near Sheffield. He was later to become

the archdeacon of York and the West Riding. Joseph Scott, appointed in 1812, was a landowner who lived in Badsworth. John Spencer Stanhope of the Cannon Hall estate, appointed in 1820, owned much of the land above the Silkstone seam of coal. Joseph Beckett of Barnsley, who owned some land, was probably the richest man in the town. He was a linen manufacturer and bleacher, banker, and owned numerous housing estates, stables, warehouses and shops. James Stuart Wortley of Wortley Hall, near Sheffield, was appointed in 1825. He later succeeded his father as Lord Wharncliffe and for a short time succeeded the Earl of Harewood as Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding. The Rev. Henry Bowen Cooke, appointed in 1830, was vicar of Darfield. Godfrey Wentworth of Woolley Park, appointed in 1831, was a landowner. John Thornley, appointed in 1833, was another landowner living on Dodworth Green. William Bennet Martin, appointed also in 1833, lived in Worsborough, south of Barnsley, where he owned a considerable amount of land. The Rev. Henry Watkins, appointed in 1836, was vicar of Silkstone. Barnsley's second resident magistrate, Thomas Taylor, had the largest linen factory in the town, and also owned some land and a number of houses. He and the Rev. William Wordsworth of Monk Bretton were appointed in 1846. There is no doubt, therefore that the majority of these magistrates were members of the landed and clerical oligarchy in areas around, but outside, Barnsley.⁵⁹ And only 3 miles to the south-west of Barnsley was Wentworth

⁵⁹ A list of the West Riding Magistrates up to 1837 appears in W.White, History, Gazetteer and Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Vol.2 (Sheffield, 1838), pp.112-113. More information is available in Joseph Wilkinson, Worthies, Families & Celebrities of Barnsley & the District, op.cit. John H. Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.II, op.cit... p.496.

House, the seat of Earl Fitzwilliam who not only was one of the major landowners in the Riding but commanded eminent social and political influence, not least in Barnsley. The second Earl was the Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding from 1794 to 1819.⁶⁰

The power of the civil authorities was buttressed by the presence of military and para-military forces. In 1821 the Barnsley troop of yeomanry, founded in 1763, expressed their underlying principles and aims in a letter to their retiring commander, landowner Captain Francis O. Edmunds:

Our regard for the Monarch and Monarchy, for the constitution and liberties of our country is still unabated; and whenever these interests may be menaced by foreign invasion or domestic anarchy, we shall be found at our post, firm and united, as the resolute defenders of the soil and institutions of our great and brave forefathers. ⁶¹

In the subsequent public disturbances, like the weavers' riots of 1829 or the Chartist agitations of 1839, 1842, and 1848, the members of the yeomanry were as good as their word. The royal dragoons, stationed at Sheffield, were occasionally resorted to when the yeomanry and the special constables could not contain the situation. At the height of the Chartist campaign temporary barracks were set up in Barnsley to accommodate troops from Sheffield.⁶²

But county administration was only one side of the total picture. There was the Lord of the Manor with certain rights and privileges pertaining to the town. From the twelfth century to the period of the Reformation Barnsley was a manor in the Honour of Pontefract under the Monks of St. John. It was the Monks who in 1241 obtained for the town a royal charter for the

⁶⁰ See F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the 19th Century, (1963), pp.47 et passim.

⁶¹ The Leeds Mercury, Febr. 24, 1821, p.1.

⁶² See Chapter Nine on Chartism. According to the census schedules of 1841, there were 34 troops at the Mount Vernon temporary barracks south of Barnsley: P.R.O., H.O.107/1323.

holding of markets and fairs. At the dissolution of the monasteries the manor came directly under the crown. William III granted it in fee to William Bentinck, Earl of Portland. His grandson, the second Earl, sold it in 1735 to Thomas Osborne, the fourth Duke of Leeds by whose descendants it was held till 1836 when, by the will of the sixth Duke, it passed on to the latter's son-in-law, Sackville Walter Lane Fox.⁶³ The Enclosure Act of 1777 redefined the rights and privileges of the Lord of the Manor. He had full rights on the fairs and markets, meaning that he could regulate their operation and collect or sell the market tolls. He was given "one seventh part of the whole of the commons, and also one seventh part of the whole of the common fields in lieu of tithes; and also one sixteenth part of the remainder in full compensation for his right to the soil of the commons" allotted to others. Besides, he was entitled to all the mines and minerals "of what nature or kind, soever they may be under the said commons."⁶⁴ Until quite late in our period the nomination of the town constables was the prerogative of the Lord of the Manor.

The fact that real practical power over the town was vested in a non-resident aristocracy and gentry, especially the Wapentake magistrates, implied two glaring weaknesses. First, the attitude of the people generally towards constituted authority was likely to have been one of remoteness, a lack of genuine affection for government. Secondly, in more practical terms, the system lacked an administrative machinery effective enough to take care of matters pertaining to the common good.

⁶³ Roland Jackson, History of the Township of Barnsley in Yorkshire from an early period. (1858), p.105.

⁶⁴ Cited in J. Wilkinson, "Barnsley Diary of Dates, Longevity, Hostelries, Crime, Commons, Newspapers, Superstitions, etc." (MS & cuttings, B.R.L.), pp.79-86.

Neither the Lord of Manor nor the magistrates (with the exception of Beckett and Taylor) would have an active interest, for example, in the town's standards of public health. The functions of the churchwardens, constables and overseers of the poor, all of whom were resident in the town, were much too limited.

At the initiative of the local manufacturers, businessmen and clergy a local Improvement Act was secured in 1822.⁶⁵ The Act created a body of Improvement Commissioners empowered to replace by co-option any one of them who either died or became disqualified, subject to the confirmation of the magistrates at the Quarter Sessions. This in effect meant that the rate-paying inhabitants played no part in the appointment of the Commissioners. Nor was there any legal means whereby they could bring pressure to bear upon the Commissioners save the ineffective system of petitioning. It was after the adoption of the 1848 Public Health Act in 1853 that the rate payers could elect the members of the Local Board of Health. Both the Improvement Commission and the Local Board of Health after it had limited legal authority and could consequently perform limited functions.⁶⁶ It was not until the incorporation of the town in 1869 that Barnsley could boast of dynamic local politics and an effective local administrative apparatus.

As for Parliamentary politics, Barnsley, like all the towns without a Borough status, was represented by county candidates. The franchise was in consequence very limited - more so before the 1832 Reform Act. From the available poll books the size of the franchise in the indicated election years was as follows:⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Anno Tertio Geo.IV. Cap.XXV.

⁶⁶ See Chapter Five below.

⁶⁷ Poll Books: 1741 (publ. Ward & Chandler, York, 1742); 1807. (publ. J.Todd et al, York, 1807); 1835 (publ. John Stanfield, Wakefield, 1835); 1841 (publ. John Stanfield, Wakefield, 1841); 1848 (publ. D.I. Roebuck, Leeds, 1849).

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of the electorate</u>
1741	47
1807	103
1835	164
1841	275
1848	300

It was a very limited franchise indeed, even on the household basis. If we extrapolate from the 1831 and 1841 census figures, we get about 2,500 male heads of households in 1835. From the above figures of registered voters in 1835, it means that only 7 per cent of the male heads of households were entitled to vote for Parliamentary candidates that year. Evidently, therefore, to the predominant majority of the inhabitants, including, almost certainly, the whole of the labouring population, the administrative and political institutions remained, as it were, forbidden ground. They could neither take part in nor influence the running of these institutions. They were participants only in so far as they were affected by the decisions made on their behalf.

Though popular society was excluded from an active administrative and political life, things were different in the religious arena where, by and large, the institutions were sustained by popular participation. This is not to suggest that such participation at all levels of the religious institutions was total. To say that would be to underestimate the oligarchic character of some of the religious organizations. Rather, I would argue that to the extent that individuals were free, at least in

theory, to belong to religious bodies of their own choice and to practise their faith accordingly, there was a meaningful personal involvement in the religious experiences which, as a result, energized and oriented the social community. One difficulty, of course, is how one makes a distinction between religious activity generated by an inward conviction and that which simply happened in conformity to established custom and practice in the community.

A brief survey of the developments in the different denominations is a useful starting point. The established church has a very old history. St. Mary's Church was built by the Monks of St. John about the year 1400. For a long time it was the only Anglican place of worship. An Act of Parliament passed in 1819 authorized the rebuilding of St. Mary's at an estimated cost of £1,200 to be raised from the rates. The new church increased accommodation from 500 to 1,045 sittings. In 1821 St. George's Church was erected under the Government's so-called 'million pound scheme'. It created 600 more sittings. A third ecclesiastical district church of St. John was built in 1851 right in the middle of Wilson's Piece and was able to accommodate 400 people.⁶⁸

The building of the three Anglican churches, capable of accommodating 2,045 people, was impressive enough but it was nothing compared to the mushrooming of non-conformist organizations and their chapels. Unlike the established Church which relied mainly on rates and governmental support, the non-conformists financed the building of their chapels through humble subscriptions by members and donations from wealthy dedicated supporters. Some of the outstanding donors were: Thomas Cope, banker, linen manufacturer and chairman of the local Gas Company, who gave £1000 to the Wesleyan

⁶⁸ Eli Hoyle, The History of Barnsley Old Church, Its Organ and Bells, (Barnsley, 1891), pp.9-34. Benjamin Turner, St. George's Church and Schools Barnsley Retrospect: 1821-1921, (Barnsley, 1921), pp.1-57. Ann M. Davies, "Education for Working Class Children in Barnsley during the 19th century with particular reference to the Barnsley School Board." (unpublished M.Ed. thesis, Univ. of Durham, 1969), p.11 & Appendix p.414.

society in 1845; John Wood, a Worsborough glass manufacturer, who gave £100 to the Baptists in 1850; John Batty, meal seller, and Truelove, warehouseman, bought a building site for the New Connection Chapel.

The first of the Dissenting chapels was the Independent Calvinistic Chapel built in Sheffield Road in 1779. But it was really the advent of Methodism that transformed the town's religious character. The Methodists had initial problems establishing themselves but when Wesley visited the town in 1786, he was able to record with optimism:

I turned to Barnsley, formerly famous for all manner of wickedness. They were then ready to tear any Methodist preacher to pieces. Now not a dog wagged its tongue. I preached near the market place to a large congregation; and I believe the word sunk into many hearts; they seemed to drink in every word. Surely, God will have a people in this place. 69

And so he did, though not to the satisfaction of future generation Methodists. In 1791 the Wesleyan Methodists started erecting their chapel on Pinfold Hill which they completed in 1794. In 1810 the chapel was expanded at a cost of £1,826. In 1836 a branch chapel was built on Doncaster Road. In 1845 the Wesleyans erected a commodious £5,000 chapel on Pitt Street where the present one stands. It was capable of accommodating 800 people. The 'Kilhamites' or New Connection Methodists put up their chapel in New Street in 1806 and later expanded it in 1827. The Primitive Methodists built their first chapel in Westgate in 1823. Later they moved to Wilson's Piece. Another secessionist Methodist organization, the Wesleyan Protestant Methodists, started, in 1828,

⁶⁹ Pitt Street Methodist Chapel (publ.) The Golden Years are the Years Ahead: 1846-1946, centenary, (Barnsley, 1946), p.5.

by holding their prayer meetings in the National School on Pease Hills. In the next year they were able to muster enough funds to erect their chapel on Blucher Street. In 1825 the Congregationalists built their chapel also in Blucher Street. The Baptists built their first chapel much later in 1850. The Quaker meeting place, first built in 1815, was on Cockeram Road. The Roman Catholics started off by meeting in private homes under the ministry of the Rev. Vincent Louis Dennis, an exiled French priest. After 1820, with the rise of an Irish immigrant community, the Catholic population enlarged and soon Holyrood Church was erected. It was rebuilt in 1832 and could provide accommodation for 600 people. If chapel building is anything to go by, the first half of the 19th century saw a burst of religious activity, which was at its peak in the 1820's and 1830's.⁷⁰ The explanation partly lies in the fast rate of population increase and partly in the trend inherent in the religious movements themselves. But how does chapel building compare with membership and composition of the membership?

Membership figures for the different bodies are hard to come by and some of those which are available give Circuit memberships which would include people from outside the township. Nevertheless, such figures give some indication of the size of the following. The Wesleyan Society membership between 1823 and 1856 ranged from 593 to 924 at any one time.⁷¹ The sittings in the Barnsley chapel between 1823 and 1832 ranged from 208 to 268.⁷² In 1824, out of a total of 285 Barnsley circuit members of the

⁷⁰ Davies, op.cit. J. Wilkinson, "Barnsley Chapels, Education, Schools, School Board, Census, Rejoicings, Exhibitions", (MS; & cuttings, B.R.L.), pp.1-2, 71. Anon, "Sundries on Wesleyanism in the Barnsley Circuit", (MS, B.R.L.). J.E. Vero (publ.), 1797-1907, The Methodist New Connection, Barnsley Circuit, (Barnsley, 1907), pp.6-19. E.G. Bayford, "The Movement that helped to make the United Methodist Church" in Barnsley Blucher Street, United Methodist Church and Circuit, 1829-1929, (Barnsley, 1929), pp.1-12.

⁷¹ Wilkinson, "Barnsley Chapels, etc.", op.cit., p.2. It is not specified whether these were circuit or township membership figures.

New Connection, 81 of them lived in Barnsley township, constituting the largest single group in the circuit.⁷³ The initial membership of the Barnsley Protestant Methodist group consisted of 240 members, 11 leaders and 7 preachers.⁷⁴ A much more useful and coherent indicator of the extent of religious worship in Barnsley is the church attendance figures collected in 1831. The figures shown in Table 1.15 reveal that 63 per cent of the adults attending public worship went to non-conformist chapels:

Table 1.15: Religious worship (including Sunday School), 1831

	<u>Chapel/Church:</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Established Church	{ St. Mary's	800	22%
	{ St. George's	170	5%
Non-Conformist Churches	{ Independent	200	6%
	{ Independent Sheff. Rd.	80	2%
	{ Wesleyan Methodists	560	15%
	{ Protestant Methodists	320	9%
	{ New Connection	260	7%
	{ Primitive Methodists	100	3%
	{ Friends	50	1%
	{ Catholics	90	2%
	{ Sunday Schools	<u>1,000</u>	<u>28%</u>
	Total	3,630	100%

Source: "Barnsley Chapels, etc." op.cit., p.273

The picture which emerged from these figures enraged the trustees of the Wesleyan Society who had laboured hard to collect them. They noted that two-thirds of the town's population never attended places of public

⁷³ Vero, op.cit., pp.6-7

⁷⁴ Bayford, op.cit., p.6.

worship, and viewed with much concern the rife infidelity which reigned among the working class. Thomas Cope, banker and manufacturer, wrote on behalf of the trustees and made an impassioned plea to the pious members of the community:

Should these persons be suffered to live and die without God and without hope? Or, should some special effort be made to rescue them from ignorance and vice? Might not all denominations of Christians unite in the God-like enterprise of saving this multitude from their sins?... Every Christian society should feel its obligation to bear a part of the expense, and do a proportion of the labour necessary to carry out amongst these benighted thousands, the Salvation of God, - 'as a lamp that burneth.'

The Wesleyans proceeded to do their bit, "persuaded that it is necessary to employ a system of means adapted to the circumstances and habits of the Poor," and built in 1836 a branch chapel and Sunday school on Doncaster Road, "within the reach of this numerous class of our townsmen."⁷⁵

How far such an offensive penetrated 'Satan's strongholds'⁷⁶ is difficult to say but what is certain is that the weight and influence of working class presence in the various organizations differed considerably. The Anglican Church and the Wesleyan Society, with their oligarchic structures and their domination by the higher echelons of the lay community, were very much microcosms of the larger society.⁷⁷ The clergy's authority on the rank and file, backed by influential local men, was comparable to that of the patrician civil authority on the whole population. The religious leaders had no prisons to deal with the deviants but they could impose certain sanctions. During the weavers' strike of 1818, for example, nine strikers who belonged to the Wesleyan Society were brought by their

⁷⁵ Wilkinson, "Barnsley Chapels, etc." op.cit., p.273.

⁷⁶ The expression is developed by Edward Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (Penguin Edition, 1968) Ch.3.

⁷⁷ See John L. Baxter, "The Methodist Experience in Sheffield, 1780-1820: A Study of Popular Religion and Social Change," (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1970), p.54.

masters before the Rev. John Hickling, the superintendent Minister of the Society, who then ordered the men to go back to work on the employers' terms. On refusing to do so, the weavers were expelled from the society.⁷⁸

Such evidence as is available, fragmentary though it may be, indicates that working-class influence was relatively strongest in the Primitive Methodist and New Connection Methodist organizations. Even the location of their humbly built chapels in the Wilson's Piece area would give strength to the claim. An analysis of the baptismal records yield the following results: of the 404 children baptised in the New Street New Connection chapel from 1797 to 1837, 276 came from weavers' families, 112 from other kinds of wage-earning families, and only 16 came from 'independent' families, consisting mostly of small masters and traders.⁷⁹ The backgrounds of the 310 children christened in the Wilson's Piece Primitive Methodist chapel are as follows: 208 from weavers' families, 42 from families in other wage employment, and only 2 from trading families.⁸⁰ The indices based on the baptismal registers would show that the proportions of working-class membership in these two religious organizations were much higher than what is reflected in the census records for the overall population.⁸¹ In the census books of 1861 one comes across names of

⁷⁸ Eli Hoyle, History of Barnsley and the Surrounding Districts (unpublished volume, B.R.L.), p.236.

⁷⁹ "New Street Methodist New Connection Baptismal Records, 1797-1837", P.R.O., R.G.4/3645.

⁸⁰ "Wilson Piece Primitive Methodists: Baptisms, 1822-37," P.R.O., R.G.4/3286.

⁸¹ Compare these figures with those in Table 1.8 above.

working men who were local Primitive Methodist preachers: James Scott, coal miner, aged 39; Charles Sykes, timber yard labourer, aged 30; and George Loveland, journeyman calenderer, aged 56.⁸² Although the Wesleyan baptismal register does not give parents' occupations, one easily recognizes names of prominent linen manufacturers like Cordeux, Hattersley, Cocker, Coe and Lindley; or other well-known entrepreneurs like Sykes, Shaw, Sheppard and Senior.⁸³ The Independent Chapel, though with a predominant working-class following, seems to have had a fairly high proportion of small traders - drapers, druggists, bakers and butchers.⁸⁴

It was not only the irreligious and pagan aspect of the 19th century 'plebeian' that perturbed the upper and middle class social engineers; his ignorance, the root of so much evil, was equally disturbing. Much importance was attached to the provision of adequate education facilities for the children of the economically deprived. Local attitudes towards the education of 'the poor' welled up during a public meeting on November 5, 1839 called to consider "the ways and means of establishing a Barnsley school for the education of the children of the poor on the principle of the British and Foreign Society." The meeting learnt that, at the most

⁸² P.R.O., R.G.9/3443-447.

⁸³ "Baptismal Register of the Barnsley Methodist (Wesleyan) Chapel - Westgate, 1786-1836" (MS., B.R.L.). Of the five recorded trustees of the Society's Chapel in the early 19th century three were manufacturers, one a grocer and the fifth a corn flour dealer: Sundries on Wesleyanism, op.cit., n.p.

⁸⁴ "Salem Chapel, Blucher St. Independent, Baptisms, 1818-1837" (MS) P.R.O., R.G.4/3285.

conservative estimate, 62 per cent of the children under the age of 15 attended no school of whatever description. Except for the members of the Anglican clergy who voiced unreserved hostility towards the idea of an interdenominational school, the rest of the speakers (indeed of the whole meeting) expressed the need for more education for working class children, presenting arguments which could be divided into three parts: social and political, moral and spiritual, and economic. W.B. Martin, a magistrate from Worsborough, asserted that the Chartist agitation of August that year was a symptom of an appalling lack of education amongst the poorer classes: "If a system of education, such as is now proposed to be given, had existed, ... these scenes of disturbance would never have been enacted." This view was reiterated by William Harvey, a linen manufacturer, who advised local men of property that "instead of spending large sums of money to protect their property, by bringing soldiers into the town, they ought to go to the root of the evil at once, and educate the rising generation." Others tended to view education in religious or moral terms. The chairman, Earl Fitzwilliam, called for that kind of education "which tends to make man acquainted with the relations which he bears to his Creator." Sir Francis Wood expressed the hope that education would "instil virtuous habits into the minds of the labouring population, and thus enable them to resist the temptation to the commission of crime." The more utilitarian argument for working class education was not lost sight of. A linen manufacturer asked: "When you talk of the commercial interests of Barnsley, where have you the men sufficiently educated to render the fancy trade what it ought to be?"⁸⁵ The above arguments

⁸⁵ John Burland, "Annals of Barnsley" Vol.II (MS, B.R.L.) pp.121-125; The Leeds Times, Nov.9, 1839, p.8.

reflected one common theme, namely a desire on the part of the upper and middle classes to assert social control through the education of the poor.⁸⁶

The philosophical and ideological arguments apart, the speakers at the meeting were right to point out that Barnsley, like many other localities at the time, had extremely poor educational facilities. The local educational institutions were grossly inadequate in both quantitative and qualitative terms. There were three main areas of weakness: the institutions were very few in number; the attendance among the registered pupils was low and irregular; and the knowledge imparted was poor in content, and badly taught. Before 1870 education in Britain was largely a matter for local initiative and charity, through the media of the religious denominations. For a town like Barnsley whose economy depended on an ailing linen trade, the lack of sufficient resources imposed a serious constraint on the financing of education. There were four kinds of educational institutions: Sunday schools, day schools, evening schools, and adult education establishments.⁸⁷

The first Sunday school, which was interdenominational, was opened in 1784 in the upper room of St. Mary's Grammar School. It was attended by about 200 pupils. But this kind of alliance between the established church and the Dissenting churches was broken by the French Revolution

⁸⁶ For an interesting analysis see Richard Johnson, "Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England," Past and Present, No.49,(Nov.1970),pp.96-119.

⁸⁷ For the subsequent details on the educational institutions of Barnsley I am mostly indebted to the work of Miss Ann M. Davies, op.cit., pp.15-125.

and the concomitant 'Jacobin scare'. From the beginning of the 19th century Sunday school operation came under the direct control of the respective denominations. The non-Conformist organizations, the Methodists in particular, spearheaded the Sunday school movement. In 1803 the Wesleyans opened their first Sunday school with financial aid from William Cookes Mence, solicitor, who had been "moved to pity by seeing so many children in the streets and lanes, ... rambling about, uncared for on Sabbath."⁸⁸ In the 1830's the Wesleyans opened three more Sunday schools in Pogmoor, Gawber, and Doncaster Road. Their Pitt Street chapel built in 1845 had room for another Sunday school. The New Connection established their Sunday school in 1806; the girls were taught over a bakehouse in Baker Street, and the boys in a room in Stringer's Yard. After moving places quite a few times, they managed to build a large permanent building in Market Street in 1835. It was not long before the school had 500 pupils on its rolls.⁸⁹ The Primitive Methodists built their Sunday schools in John Street, Wilson's Piece, in 1822. The Protestant Methodists had theirs in the basement of their Blucher Street chapel erected in 1829. Both the Congregationalists and the Baptists had each a Sunday school; the former built theirs around 1830, and the latter apparently much later. The Catholics are said to have accelerated their Sunday school movement after the mid-1840's. The established Church concentrated its energy in the earlier period on the development of day schools, though Sunday school development caught on after 1840. The Odd Fellows attempted to run an unsectarian Sunday school aimed at giving "a sound and secular education on perfectly rational lines." In 1842

⁸⁸ Cited in Davies, op.cit., p.18.

⁸⁹ Vero, op.cit., p.19.

their school had 166 children on their register, about 6 per cent of the total Sunday school pupils.⁹⁰ The investigations of the Children's Employment Commission in 1842 revealed that a total of 2,622 children were registered as Sunday school pupils in the following proportions: 787, or 30 per cent, for the established Church, 1,669, or 64 per cent, for the non-Conformist churches; and 166, or 6 per cent, for the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows.⁹¹

The Day Schools fell into three categories, namely, Dame schools, Elementary schools, and Advanced schools. The Dame schools were barely more than baby caring establishments run by barely literate women. In 1842 there were 15 of them attended by a total of 357 children. Rudiments of reading, spelling and sewing were sometimes taught. The established Church did better than the other churches in respect of elementary schools primarily because they had more money. The Pitt Street school which originated from the George Ellis charity of 1771 came under the full control of the incumbent of St. George's in 1831 and remained the only local elementary school till 1840. With financial aid from subscriptions, the Diocesan fund and the National Society three more schools were built: St. George's in 1840, St. Mary's in 1843, and St. John's in 1847. The Wesleyan day school was established in the Sunday school premises in 1843 at a cost of £889 of which £111 came from the Committee of Council and the rest was raised locally. The Catholics opened their first elementary

⁹⁰ P.P. 1842, (381). XVI. Children's Employment (mines) Appendix to First Report, part I, sub-Commissioners' report and evidence. Appendix K, p.221.

⁹¹ Ibid.

school in 1832 in the cellars of Holyrood church. In 1848 they converted two cottages adjoining the church. In 1858 a new Catholic school, capable of accommodating 600 children, was opened on Dodworth Road. There were some privately owned schools for those who could afford them, but the denominational schools admitted by far the majority of the pupils. The endowed Grammar school, theoretically the only means by which capable children of the poor could get education above elementary level, was an object of envy. There were two of them, one originating from the charity of Thomas Keresforth, dated 1660, and the other from the Ellis charity already mentioned. But, as the Charity Commission found out in 1826, no children were taught gratuitously in these schools.⁹² The rest of the advanced schools were 'private academies' attended by children of parents "above the manual labouring class."⁹³

Many Day schools established within their own premises facilities for evening classes as a remedial measure to cater for children of the ages of 15 to 20 whose earlier education in Day or Sunday Schools had been deficient. The details about such institutions are shrouded in obscurity, except that it is mentioned by a student of nineteenth century education in Barnsley that by 1850 they had become "a striking feature."⁹⁴

The catalogue of educational institutions might appear impressive but the figures of the number of children they catered for are not so

⁹² Davies, op.cit., p.144. See also Chapter Four, infra, pp.247-249.

⁹³ Ibid, p.125.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.70. J.H. Burland, "Miscellaneous Writings of J.H. Burland," (MS., B.R.L.), p.88.

reassuring. According to the investigations of Thomas Wilson, in 1839, only 469 boys and 307 girls were receiving education. Wilson's calculations revealed that a total of 1,849 children of school-going age received no educational instruction whatsoever.⁹⁵ The findings of the Children's Employment Commission in 1842, which contained more detail, showed a similar pattern. The boys and girls attending Day schools numbered 466; those in Dame schools, 303, and those in Sunday schools, 2,456. Assistant Commissioner Symons estimated that 2,080 children, or 68 per cent of the total, had no opportunity for day school education. The obvious reason, of course, was that there were very few schools to attend, anyway. But even among the registered pupils, absenteeism was very high. In the day schools it was about 17 per cent, in the Sunday schools it was as high as 26 per cent. Two related reasons were responsible for such a state of affairs: first the fees charged in the schools, and second the fact that many children had to assist their parents in the loom shops and the mines or take up employment in their own right. All the day schools charged from 2d. to 6d. a week, this being the only way in which they could meet their recurrent expenditure. Many hand-loom weavers, earning hardly more than subsistence wages, were thus deterred from sending their children to school. That many children had to work full time instead of going to school was one of the major points in the report of Assistant Commissioner Symons. Many children who worked as hurriers in the mines complained that at the end of the week they usually felt too tired to attend the freely

⁹⁵ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", Vol.II, op.cit. p.122. Wilson must have disregarded the Sunday schools in his calculations.

provided Sunday schools.⁹⁶

Since the educational institutions were, with very few exceptions, under the control of the religious denominations, their major concern was with the dissemination of the word of God.. Their approach was therefore a functional one: teaching to read (and, rarely, write) through bible drilling. Only very few of the schools went beyond the three R's. Even the few skills which they learned were very badly taught owing to the lack of properly trained teachers. To most pupils the monitorial system was the only option. Local annalist, John Burland, who experienced the town's educational system both as a pupil and as a teacher, expressed it aptly in a poem which he wrote in the 1880's as a tribute to a deceased teacher:

Now few are dead, the rest are bald and grey,
Who wined beneath this stern preceptor's cane
For most of us it grieves much to say,
Unwillingly attended learning's fane.
Unruly swarms of boys at Peas hill school,
A little learning, much correction got,
For well he flogged each wayward dunce and fool,
And lusty strokes befell my lot
He taught the monitors, they taught the boys,
Who slowly learned to cipher, read and write -
A mode of teaching not without alloys
Now much ammended, though not perfect quite. 97

In the day schools, among 466 children attending. in 1842, only 288 could read the testament and only 189 could write fairly well.⁹⁸ Assistant Commissioner Symons was disappointed to find that although many children in the schools could repeat church catechism fluently enough, they could give no intelligent account of its meaning.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Children's Employment Commission, sub-Commissioners' report, op.cit. pp.197. I have calculated the attendance figures from Ibid, Appendix I, pp.220-221. See also Michael Sanderson, "Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England," Past and Present, No..59, (Aug.1972), p.79.

⁹⁷ J.H. Burland, "Alexander Alexis Ross" in Mr. Burland's Poems (n.d. B.R.L.).

⁹⁸ Children's Employment, Report (1842) op.cit. App.I.

Evidently, therefore, educational facilities were not within the reach of many working-class children. The schools were few, and in the schools available the fees charged were prohibitive, so that many parents would rather have their children contributing to the family bread. Even those lucky few who managed to get places in the schools found no positive motivation in the system. Their untrained teachers could only offer them rote learning and 'lusty strokes'. No wonder that absenteeism was so high.

There are indications that Barnsley had a vigorous adult education movement in the first half of the 19th century. We are told of the existence of adult night schools, though there is no mention of the extent of their activities.¹⁰⁰ But there are other institutions whose history is less obscure. In 1831 the short-lived Barnsley Mechanics Institute was founded. It broke up in the same year over a controversy concerning Scott's novels, regarded by some of the members as unfit for the Institute's library since they were not conducive to moral and intellectual improvement.¹⁰¹ The richer members of the town established in September 1833 the Barnsley Literary and Philosophical Society under the patronage of Lords Wharncliffe and Milton, but, once again, the society was torn by factionalism in the following year.¹⁰² In 1836 another effort was made to revive a mechanics' institute when the Barnsley Institute for Promoting Education and Science was established. In 1837, when it enjoyed a membership of 120, it affiliated itself to the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes. Although

¹⁰⁰ Hubert C. Hillary, "The Development of Education in Barnsley in the 19th century prior to Direct State Intervention (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1941), Appendix (i).

¹⁰¹ J. Popple, "Adult Education in Barnsley, 1831-48", (typescript, 13 pp., 1958: Sheffield Central Library, Archives Dept.), p.1.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.2.

the Institute was supposed to cater for townsmen, regardless of social classes, its domination by the middle classes was conspicuous from the beginning. Its twelve-man Committee consisted of five linen manufacturers, two coal-owners, a surgeon, a mineral surveyor, an auctioneer and valuer, a postmaster and a master-mason.¹⁰³ The Society's Annual Report of 1842 was able to boast that "not one" of its members had associated himself with the Chartist meetings of 1839-40, or engaged "in any procession of an intimidating character."¹⁰⁴ By 1844 the Institute had completely broken up, apparently under the strain of both dissension and lack of money.¹⁰⁵ It re-emerged in March 1848, rechristened the Barnsley Mechanics' Institute and Literary Society. Since it had been reactivated as a response to a challenge posed by the success of the Franklin Club, a working-class mutual improvement society, it was even more of a middle-class institution this time. By 1855 the Institute had achieved a great deal. It had its own hall on Wellington Street where its members regularly attended concerts and lectures on literary and scientific subjects. It also ran a reading room, well-supplied with current newspapers and periodicals, and a lending library consisting of a stock of 1,200 volumes.¹⁰⁶ By and large, the institute remained foreign territory for the town's working class --- so much so, in fact, that in 1867 the Barnsley Chronicle commented that the term "Mechanics' Institute" was a misnomer for an

¹⁰³ The Constitution and Laws of the Barnsley Institute for Promoting Education and Science (Barnsley, 1837), p.14. The occupations of the Committeemen are from White's West Riding Directory for 1837.

¹⁰⁴ Popple, op.cit., p.8. For the middle-class domination of the Mechanics Institutes see J.F.C. Harrison, Learning and Living, 1790-1960 (1961), pp.58ff. But this view is modified in a revisionist article: Edward Royle, "Mechanics' Institutes and the Working Classes," Historical Journal, Vol.XV, (1971), pp.305-321.

¹⁰⁵ Popple, op.cit., p.10.

¹⁰⁶ The Barnsley Times, Dec.29, 1855, p.2.

an institution which catered for members of the middle class.¹⁰⁷

Initiatives in creating adult education institutions to cater for working-class townsmen were not wanting. Apart from the paternalistic, clergy-controlled Church Institute which was active from 1848 to 1856,¹⁰⁸ there were others truly indigenous to labouring Barnsley. Early in 1834 a group of five consisting of two weavers, a shoe-maker, a journeyman-joiner and a druggist, established a rival institution to the middle-class Literary and Philosophical Society. Subscription was only a penny a week for which members attended classes and listened to regular lectures in the New Connection Chapel, and enjoyed the facilities of a reading room and a library. The Society prospered for nine months until the radical Joseph Crabtree was proposed for membership. He was rejected by a majority vote on the ground that he was the local leader of "the infidel party, challenging anyone to prove the existence of God, or of the truths of revealed religion."¹⁰⁹ The vote against the admission of Crabtree gave rise within the Society to factions which it was unable to endure. Some working men joined the Institute for Promoting Education and Science but, much to their disappointment, they discovered that there was no love lost between them and their social betters. They responded to the challenge with a resolve to create more enduring mutual improvement societies.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ M. Hepworth, "Problems of Libraries in the Barnsley District," (unpublished M.A. thesis, Loughborough University of Technology, 1969), pp.19.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.11.; Hillary, op.cit., Appendix (iii). For the function and character of the church institutes see Harrison, op.cit., pp.180ff.

¹⁰⁹ Popple, op.cit., p.3. Because the founder members were themselves radicals (e.g. John Widdop), Crabtree must have been rejected for his infidel views and not for his political radicalism.

¹¹⁰ On the mutual improvement societies see Harrison, op.cit., pp.49-57, and the same author in "Self-education of working men in the 19th century", (summary of paper), History of Education Society Bulletin, No.14, (Autumn 1974), p.6.

The two decades or so from 1840 were, as far as adult education is concerned, the golden age of working-class mutual improvement. In 1840 the Oddfellows' Sunday School teachers formed themselves into a mutual improvement society which included such notable ex-Chartists as John Burland and Joseph Wilkinson. They remained active up to about 1842.¹¹¹ On April 3, 1843 three working men, John Burland, John Kenworthy and John Garlick founded what has been correctly described as "a particularly successful improvement society."¹¹² This was the Barnsley Franklin Club, named after Benjamin Franklin, the self-taught American philosopher. The three original members met regularly to assist each other in learning, and subscribed each week 1½ pence towards the cost of paper, ink and candles. Other working men were soon attracted to the Society in such great numbers that a commodious room had to be hired at 9 shillings a week.¹¹³ That the Club emanated from the frustrations of working men who had sought to develop themselves within the framework of the middle-class controlled Mechanics' Institute is told by a historian and leading member of the Franklin Club:

When working men, by their repeated efforts, became as intelligent, as well qualified to dilate upon the arts and sciences, as formidable in discussion, as the rich, the spirit of exclusivism immediately became engendered, and the consequence was that the working men preferred absence to insult -- they could not bear the scowls of contempt cast upon them by intolerant aristocrats -- ... the Mechanics Institute drooped like a dying tree with this unmistakable inscription on its stem, "Blighted by the conventionalities of money possessors." ¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Popple, op.cit., p.11.

¹¹² Harrison, Learning & Living, op.cit., p.367.

¹¹³ Popple, op.cit., pp.11f.; J.H. Burland, "Miscellaneous Writings" (MS., B.R.L.), pp.51f; William Lawton, "History of Barnsley Franklin Club - the reason for its formation," (4pp. Ms. Cusworth Hall Museum). Wm. Lawton acted as Secretary to the Club in the 1840's and 1850's.

¹¹⁴ Lawton, "History of the Barnsley Franklin Club", op.cit.

As one would expect, the Society in its early stages concerned itself with remedial education, "not daring to soar into the lofty spheres of science until a firm foundation was laid..."¹¹⁵ The major subjects originally taught were reading, writing, grammar and geography.¹¹⁶ In the late 1840's and early 1850's the Society still prided itself on its working-class indigenoussness; it was still run and financed by working men without any patronage.¹¹⁷ In 1850 when it had a membership of 120, the Club gained affiliation to the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes. In its annual Report for 1851 the Yorkshire Union found it necessary to point out that the Barnsley Franklin Club "belongs to the working men, is managed by them and is in every way subservient to their educational necessities."¹¹⁸

During the 1850's the Franklin Club experienced a remarkable degree of transformation. Not only was the horizon of knowledge pursued by its members greatly extended but also the Club lost its genuine working-class character and increasingly became a hotbed of 'class collaboration'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ From the preamble to: Rules of the Barnsley Franklin Club, (Barnsley, 1845), p.3.

¹¹⁶ Rule No.3. Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Cusworth Hall Museum: Wm Lawton (secretary) to Henry Vincent, Oct.13, 1849; Secretary of the Sheffield People's College to Joseph Wilkinson (Franklin Club secretary), Dec.18, 1849; Jos. Wilkinson to Secretary, Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, Oct.7, 1850. The Leeds Times, Feb.5, 1848, p.5.

¹¹⁸ Annual Report of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes (Leeds, 1851), p.27.

¹¹⁹ This point is elaborated in connection with the decline of the Chartist movement in Chapter Nine below.

Towards the end of the 1840's it began to reach out for middle-class benefaction. In 1848 it made its first public appeal to the "enlightened public" for financial support,¹²⁰ and in the 1850's it enjoyed handsome donations.¹²¹ In 1855 the Club consisted of 300 members to whom it offered good educational facilities. There was the reading room stocked with three dailies, two twice-weeklies, fifteen weeklies, twenty monthly magazines and other periodicals. The lending library consisted of 1,950 volumes. During the year ending April 1855 the Club held five public lectures. Although during the same year regular classes were held in certain advanced subjects, especially Literature, Drama and Philosophy, the Annual Report lamented that the "lack of funds" had hindered the establishment of elementary classes.¹²² From the 1850's to the Club's eventual decline around 1870 not only did a number of middle-class individuals participate in the Club's activities but some even held positions of responsibility in it.¹²³

After saying this, however, one must acknowledge the fact that a number of Barnsley working men scored eminent intellectual and literary achievements within the Franklin Club. The indefatigable Barnsley annalist and poet, John Hugh Burland, who started off as a linen weaver and at other times had worked, in his own words, as "a shoeblack, a knife-cleaner, a

¹²⁰ Handbill dated June 9th 1848 and signed by William Bailey, Chairman: Cusworth Hall Museum (Barnsley drawer).

¹²¹ The Barnsley Times, April 21, May 19, 1855 & March 29, 1856.

¹²² Ibid., April 9, 1855, p.2.

¹²³ Ibid., March 29, 1856, p.3. The Sheffield Free Press, April 22, 1854, p.3; Hepworth, op.cit., pp.14-15.

currier of horses," and had only "picked up literature like a vagabond,"¹²⁴ improved himself within the Club which he founded. He was later to acquire the status of National School headmaster. Another Barnsley writer and historian, Joseph Wilkinson, who for years was secretary to the Club, was originally a linen weaver as well. Amos Maudsley, the celebrated Barnsley poet, who delivered some of the Club's outstanding public lectures, originated from a radical shoe-making family.¹²⁵

Institutions like the Franklin Club or the Mechanics' Institute, however, admittedly catered for only a minority of townsmen. There were innumerable working men who pursued self-improvement outside the confines of formal institutions. The world of Barnsley working-class radicals was full of individuals who taught themselves to read and write. Richard Jackson, for example, veteran of the post-Napoleonic war radicalism, only went to Sunday school but was later to acquire the reputation of a voracious reader who "usually had a book laid before him while plying the shuttle."¹²⁶ The Chartist Joseph Crabtree was taught to read and write by his wife and later learned English Grammar and Latin on his own. While he was a Chartist prisoner at Wakefield, he taught himself French. He ended his radical career by founding a school in the 1840's.¹²⁷ The community of townsmen indeed presented a cornucopia of personal initiative which often was deployed in attempting to exert some influence on a generally hostile environment.

¹²⁴ Burland, "Miscellaneous Writings," op.cit., p.23.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp.32ff.

¹²⁶ Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary" (Ms. & cuttings, B.R.L.), p.136.

¹²⁷ P.R.O., H.O.20/10: "Confidential Report made by the Inspector of Prisons upon the cases of the Political Offenders in custody on the 1st January 1841."

To early 19th century labouring Barnsley, the town offered some hope but also abounded in despair. In a town with an upcoming textile industry and rich coal deposits there was much to hope for - for entrepreneurs and workers alike. The forces of economic change transformed the whole environment. Roads, canals and then railways linked the town with other towns and cities in different directions, paving the way for its industrial and social development. Anxious (and desperate) people poured in from different parts: from the agricultural neighbourhood as well as from as far afield as Lancashire and Ireland. For some time the building industry boomed and the face of the town was transformed. For a time also the linen trade did reasonably well and those displaced by the cotton power-loom or the vicissitudes of the Irish economy were able to find work. No sooner did they settle down to their looms, however, than things began to go awry. More and more people thronged in to compete for its limited jobs. As if this was not enough, the linen trade was beset by chronic trade depressions. The wage rates tumbled, the houses got overcrowded, and then started the story of despair. When the mining industry came to the rescue of the town, for some it was too late; they were already too old and too weak to go down the shafts.

In a sense little consolation could be derived from everything else in the town. In a situation where the chance of owning a home was nil, sometimes the labouring man had to play subservient not only to his employer but also to his landlord, more so because this same man was probably also the magistrate or churchwarden, or constable, or Improvement Commissioner or someone likely to relieve him when he was on the dole -

the man 'up there' in charge of matters which concerned him but in which he had absolutely no say. Chances were that his children would grow up to inherit his role, for what was there for them but want? Want of material goods and of educational facilities -- except, in the majority of cases, for the Sunday exhortation of spiritual conditioning. But in the foregoing discussion we have also seen evidence (and there is more to come) that labouring Barnsley was unwilling to play the unresponsive victim of impersonal forces or even of human agency. Where there was despair they endeavoured to create conditions for hope. The men of the Franklin Club, for example, with their spirit of self-development and their rejection of the threat of excommunication, are a case in point. It was in such spirit of self-development that the town's workers took part in the struggles on which this study will later focus its attention.¹²⁸ We now go on to examine the town's staple industries in order to see, from close quarters, the functioning of the forces of hope and despair.

¹²⁸ See Part. 2 of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LINEN INDUSTRY AND ITS WORKERS

This fate of the weavers is similar to the fate of Milton's devils, their course being ever downwards to the lowest depth of social perdition. Alas! Poor Humanity! (John Hugh BURLAND in 1878)

I. The Rise of a Staple Industry:

The central importance of the textile industry in the English Industrial Revolution is universally recognized. The weakness in the historiography lies in the concentration upon cotton to the relative exclusion of other branches.¹ It may be argued that the study of industrial revolutions is not merely about innovations, growth and expansion; it is also about stagnation, decline and decay, for it may happen that some sectors of an economy will expand at the expense of others. If the cotton industry has received so much attention owing to its success story, there could be some justification for examining those branches of the textile industry which fell victim to King Cotton's triumph. Linen was such an industry. Whereas the linen industries of both Scotland and Ireland have been fairly well studied mainly because of their relative importance to the economies of these countries, the

¹ See Duncan Bythell, The Handloom Weavers: a Study in the English Cotton Industry During the Industrial Revolution, (1969), pp.1-3. The author notes a tendency among recent economic historians to de-emphasize the role of cotton as a reaction to the preoccupation with it by the earlier generations of economic historians.

story of the linen industry in England, an industry probably as big as that of either Scotland or Ireland, is shrouded in obscurity.²

Despite the fact that English linen was, to a very great extent, routed by cotton, the former assumed considerable importance in some localities especially in Yorkshire. Indeed, because of the substitution of many cotton goods for linen, the production of linen had, perforce, to be restricted to only a few areas if it were to survive as a dynamic industry in the nineteenth century. Throughout the first half of the century linen was the staple trade of Barnsley, the town which, in time, became famous as the centre of the English linen trade.³ Four major factors, of both local and national dimensions, accounted for the location of linen production in Barnsley. The first was an accident of history, connected with the enterprise of one man; the second was the powerful rise of the cotton industry; the third was the existence of such local facilities as transport and coal; and the fourth and most important factor was the development of the spinning of flax by power in Leeds, only 19 miles to

² A similar complaint has recently been made by N.B.Harte, "The Rise of Protection and the English Linen Trade, 1690-1790," in N.B. Harte & K. Ponting, (eds.), Textile History and Economic History, (Manchester, 1973), p.74. In Ibid., p.96 and Phyllis Deane & W.A. Cole, British Economic Growth, 1688-1959 (Cambridge, 2nd ed. 1969), pp.202-204 there is evidence that the English linen manufacture was as big as that of Scotland or Ireland. For the linen industries of Scotland and Ireland see, A.J. Warden, The Linen Trade, Ancient and Modern, (1864); D. Bremner, The Industries of Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1869), Ch.10; W. Carter, A Short History of the Linen Trade, Vol.I, (Belfast, 1952); E.R.R. Green, The Lagan Valley, 1800-1850, (1949?); C. Gill, The Rise of the Irish Linen Industry, (1925 - reprint, 1964).

³ See, for example, George Dodd, The Textile Manufactures of Great Britain, (1844), p.167. R. Jackson, The History of the Township of Barnsley, (1858), p.46.

the north of Barnsley. This chapter deals with the development of linen production in Barnsley in the first half of the 19th century. It highlights the problems with which the industry was beset and, as a central theme, assesses the impact of such problems on the labour force, especially the hand-loom weavers.

The introduction of the linen trade into Barnsley is usually attributed to William Wilson, a Quaker who immigrated into Barnsley from Cheshire. It is said that in 1744 he started off by sending linen yarn across the moors to be woven near Mottram in Cheshire, his place of origin. Eventually, he convinced his weavers to settle in Barnsley as the first set of the town's hand-loom weavers. Wilson acquired two warehouses and set up bleach works and crofts in the Dearne valley. His success later attracted other local entrepreneurs, like Joseph Beckett and Edward Taylor, into the trade. More weavers were recruited from Lancashire and Cheshire. In the tradition of the town William Wilson is famous as a social 'hermit' who had no match in his shrewdness and business acumen.⁴ The Barnsley industry remained a small-scale operation for a long time so that even as late as 1773 when a Parliamentary Committee inquired into the state of the linen trade, Barnsley was not one of the places visited by the Committee.⁵ By the time Wilson died in 1793, however, there had developed in the

⁴ For the origins of Barnsley linen: John Hugh Burland, "Social & Scenic Pictures of Barnsley in the 18th Century," (cuttings from the Barnsley Times, B.R.L.) n.p.; Idem, Memoirs of William Wilson (1860); John F. Goodchild, "The Barnsley Linen Industry", (unpublished typescript), n.p.; Thomas Lister, "A Sketch of Barnsley, its Mineral and Manufacturing Products, and Natural History," in Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological Society, 1857, Vol.3, pp.580-581; Yorkshire Union of Mechanics Institute (publ.), A Historical Account of Barnsley, its Industries & Principal Objects of Interest, (Barnsley, 1878), pp.5-6. In Wilkinson, Worthies, Families and Celebrities of Barnsley and the District, op.cit., pp.75-77 there is an interesting story of how Wilson outwitted his business rivals in the purchasing of Continental yarn at Hull.

⁵ P.P. 1773 (30), Vol.III, Report from the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Present State of the Linen Trade in Great Britain.

town a group of linen manufacturers who played a very important part in its economy. In 1790 there was a total of seven manufacturers who supplied 500 hand-loom with 10,000 bundles of yarn a year.⁶

That one immigrant to the town should have successfully introduced the linen trade was probably fortuitous, but the timing of the start of linen production in the town was in line with national developments. In 1743 the system of bounties to encourage the export of linen cloth came into being. The money to finance this first positive encouragement to linen production was raised by imposing a heavy duty on imported cambric, and was paid to exporters of the coarsest types of linen. In 1745 an additional bounty was granted on certain linens of a better quality. Although the bounties lapsed in 1753, they were re-imposed in 1756. By the time the bounties were abolished in 1832 they had covered a wide range of linen goods.⁷ In the 1750's import duty on yarn was removed.⁸ It is very likely that the system of bounties, coupled with the commercial expansion of linen fostered by tariff protection at home and the mercantile laws in the colonies, acted as a motivation for the pioneers of the Barnsley linen industry. By the 1750's some Irish linen manufacturers acknowledged the strength of the English trade; and by the latter part of the 18th century linen had become the staple industry at Darlington, Stockton, Cleveland, Barnsley, Knaresborough, Lancaster, Preston, Warrington, Wigan, Blackburn, Manchester, and in some non-woollen areas of Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Wiltshire.⁹

⁶ W.G. Rimmer, Marshalls of Leeds, Flax Spinners, (1960), p.5.

⁷ Harte, op.cit., p.99; John Horner, The Linen Trade of Europe, (Belfast, 1920), Ch.XXVI.

⁸ Harte, op.cit., p.98.

⁹ Ibid., p.102-103. See also Duncan Bythell, "The Hand-loom Weavers in the English Cotton Industry during the Industrial Revolution: Some Problems," in Economic History Review, 2nd. series, Vol.XVII, (1964-5), p.343.

Before the 1770's the so-called cotton cloth produced in North and West Lancashire was actually a 'union' of cotton weft and linen warp as the spinning wheel was not capable of producing strong cotton warp in sufficient quantities.¹⁰ It was not until the 1770's, when the jenny and the water-frame came into being, that the production of pure cotton cloth was made possible. Crompton's mule improved on the previous devices and could spin fine yarns for muslins.¹¹ By vastly raising productivity in the spinning branch these technical innovations in the cotton industry cut production cost per unit and offered a serious challenge to the producers of the other textiles. In the 1780's producers of woollens, silks and linens began to complain that cottons were underselling their products. The dramatic fall in cotton prices between 1790 and 1815, when most prices were rising substantially, helped to popularise cotton goods in the domestic market. Cotton successfully competed with the other textiles for capital, management, labour and, above all, markets. From the 1780's linen spinners and weavers in Lancashire, Scotland and even Ireland started moving over to the production of cottons.¹² King Cotton's success story had begun. Though cotton successfully competed against linen, however, it did not put it out of existence, mainly for three reasons. First, linen had certain advantages over cotton: the beauty of its finish, its durability, its power of absorption and its resistance to attack by moths. Secondly, certain high quality household linens like damasks and diapers, products

¹⁰ Michael Edwards, The Growth of the British Cotton Trade, 1780-1815, (Manchester, 1967), p.3; Edward Baines, History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain, (2nd edn., 1966), p.108.

¹¹ Edwards, op.cit., p.5; Warden, op.cit., p.373.

¹² Edwards, op.cit., pp.7-8, 27-28; Gill, op.cit., pp.227-238; Bremner, op.cit. p.230. Stanley D. Chapman, "Fixed Capital Formation in the British Cotton Industry, 1770-1815," in Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol.XXIII (1970) p.237.

which the rich enjoyed buying, could not be easily replaced. In fact, cotton succeeded in routing only apparel linen; household linen proved more resilient. Lastly, the demand for linen goods for the war effort further ensured the survival of the industry.¹³ But in the face of the competition of cotton, a locational shift in production was inevitable, if linen was to survive at all. If concentrated only in few localities, the industry would enjoy some external economies. The weaving branch would have easier, and probably cheaper, access to the services of yarn agents, bleachers, calenderers, dyers and, maybe, drapers. Barnsley, which already had a nucleus of such establishments by the last quarter of the 18th century, was well-placed for specialization in linen production. It also had good transport communication and cheap coal, facilities which Knaresborough, another 18th century Yorkshire linen centre, did not have.¹⁴ When the Barnsley Canal was opened in 1799, linen yarn and cloth were among the major traffic on the canal.¹⁵

The greatest single factor in the development of Barnsley linen was the beginning in Leeds of flax spinning by power at the turn of the 18th century. An inelastic and uneven fibre, flax could not be spun on the machinery developed in the cotton industry. In December 1787 John Marshall of Leeds sought and obtained permission to copy and use the flax spinning machinery which had been patented by John Kendrew and Thomas Porthouse,

¹³ Gill, op.cit., p.242; Edwards, op.cit., pp.30-33.

¹⁴ Rimmer, op.cit., p.163; Redford, op.cit., p.51. For the location in Barnsley of linen production see Redford, idem, pp.49-50 and Warden, op.cit., pp.381-387. Coal became a major factor later when power-looms were introduced (i.e. the late 1830's); but bleaching always needed fuel as it involved boiling the linen cloth at some stages of the process.

¹⁵ Charles Hadfield, The Canals of Yorkshire, Vol.I (Newton Abbot, 1972), p.179. For the development of transport generally, see Chapter One, Section II above.

both of Darlington, earlier in June of the same year. Marshall's venture had initial difficulties but he improved on the original design and took out patents in 1790 and 1793; in the latter year he substituted steam for water power. Henceforward, the experiment was such a success that by 1803 the business was self-financing. In 1804 Marshall's firm was able to produce lighter yarn for medium linens, though the bulk of the output still remained heavy yarn.¹⁶ His success brought more entrepreneurs in Leeds into the flax spinning industry, so that by the end of the Napoleonic wars Marshall felt the impact of their competition. About the end of the 1820's there were seventeen spinners with 50,000 spindles, 800 horse power and a labour force of 5,000. Leeds had become the most important flax spinning centre in the United Kingdom, indeed in the world.¹⁷ To the Barnsley linen manufacturers the development was an important breakthrough which eliminated one serious bottleneck on the supply side. Leeds yarn cushioned the Barnsley manufacturers against the adverse effects of the shortage of continental yarn during the wars. While Leeds concentrated on spinning, Barnsley specialised on the weaving and finishing end of the linen trade. Such a geographical separation of the two processes was similar (although not quite similar) to the situation in the Lancashire cotton industry.¹⁸ The two branches were, of course, intimately connected.

¹⁶ Rimmer, *op.cit.*, pp.9-58.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.124-125; Warden, *op.cit.*, p.384.

¹⁸ See J.Jewkes, "The Localization of the Cotton Industry" in Economic History, Vol.II, (1930-1933), p.91. In Knaresborough, however, most of the yarn woven there was spun locally; see Bernard Jennings (ed.), A History of Harrogate and Knaresborough, (Huddersfield, 1970), pp.263ff.

Technological innovations apart, it was Barnsley's demand for the Leeds yarn that accounted for great increases of yarn production by attracting spinners, big and small, into the industry. Their ability to respond to Barnsley's needs in turn enabled the town's linen industry to beat the war shortages of continental yarn and embark on expansion. It is estimated that in 1812 about half of the yarn output at Leeds was sold to the largest weaving houses at Barnsley.¹⁹

Although Leeds was the largest single supplier of Barnsley's linen yarn, it could not satisfy all of the latter's needs. Before the late 1820's the spinning machinery was not sufficiently developed to produce light yarn. From about 1810 many Barnsley manufacturers felt confident enough to start investing in light products for household linens, products which the cotton industry had not yet managed to replace - huckabacks, diapers, damasks and fine broad sheetings. The yarn for these superior products was hand-spun and imported from Russia, the Baltics and the Low Countries. But 70 per cent of the Barnsley linen industry produced heavy linen for which all the yarn was mill-spun at Leeds. Some of the largest Leeds firms, however, who could afford to erect superior mills, were able to supply Barnsley with medium yarn.²⁰ John Marshall pioneered the innovation by experimenting in the use of 'gill frames' in 1818. By

¹⁹ Rimmer, op.cit., p.128. As to why there was no vertical integration of spinning and weaving in Leeds, it would appear that because weaving, unlike spinning, was still done by hand up to the 1840's, it would constitute a bottleneck and therefore offered no attraction to the spinners.

²⁰ Ibid., pp.127-129; Gill, op.cit., p.265.

1826 Marshall had achieved satisfactory results and claimed that the new machinery could make yarns "twice as fine" as in 1816.²¹ It was not until the invention of wet spinning in 1825 by James Kay, however, that a real breakthrough was made in the production of fine yarn by power.²² The Marshall family and other Leeds spinners improved on Kay's principle and by the early 1830's they were producing considerable quantities of fine yarn, thus undercutting the continental fine yarn producers in the Barnsley market. The Barnsley light and fancy linen trade, which boomed at this time, was able to benefit from the proximity of the source of its major input.

It would appear that the Barnsley linen industry experienced the most rapid growth in the second decade of the nineteenth century, starting mainly towards the end of the wars. In 1812 nineteen master-manufacturers put out a quarter of a million bundles of yarn to 800 looms and collected 100,000 or so pieces of heavy linen especially towellings, sheetings, dowlas and ducks. In 1818 the consumption of yarn stood at half a million bundles a year, that is double the amount used six years earlier. Besides, finer products were now increasing their share of the market. In 1822, 36 manufacturers employed about 3,000 looms to weave nearly three-quarters of a million bundles of linen yarn.²³ Within a single decade, therefore, both Barnsley's number of master-manufacturers and their annual consumption of yarn trebled; its stock of hand-loom increased nearly fourfold. It will be recalled that during the same period the town experienced the most rapid population growth ever recorded in its history.²⁴

²¹ Gill, op.cit., p.142.

²² Ibid., Ch.IV; Horner, op.cit., pp.161-163; Green, op.cit., p.112.

²³ Rimmer, op.cit., p.127. The increase in the consumption of yarn per loom between 1789 (p86) and 1812 seems fantastic. It raises doubts about the accuracy of the figures. In view of the time-lag, it is possible that the size of the yarn bundle changed over time, but it may also reflect improvement in the quality of the loom.

²⁴ See Table 1.4 above.

After 1822 it becomes extremely difficult to find a satisfactory index for measuring the growth of the Barnsley linen industry. The only yardstick available is the number of linen manufacturers published in the Directories over the period. Unfortunately, owing to the nature of the available Directories, it is not possible to get statistics of linen manufacturers at regular intervals. Nevertheless, the figures in Table 2.1 are capable of giving us a satisfactory impression of the trend over our period. Numbers of firms over a period do not necessarily establish a rising or declining trend in a given industry, but in the absence of better information, there is no alternative to their use as indicators. Entry into an industry, however, will normally be dictated by perceived prospects, based on the industry's past performance. The number of manufacturers, therefore, is not always a reliable index for estimating the rate of growth of an industry in a given period. It is also likely that the diversification of the linen product consequent upon the introduction of the jacquard loom after 1830 accounted for some of the entries into the industry which may not necessarily have led to a corresponding rise in total output. The low rate of entry of manufacturers in 1837-52 as shown in Table 2.1 certainly reflects the decline of hand-loom weaving. But it does not necessarily imply a slow-down in the increase of total production. The increased capital requirements, occasioned by the advent of the power-loom, deterred some of the prospective manufacturers;

Table 2.1: Linen manufacturers and approximate no. of looms employed:

Year	Linen Manufacturers			Number of Looms Employed	
	number	partnerships or joint-stock firms	proportion of joint-stock firms	Total	Per Manufacturer
1790	7	1	14%	500	71
1812	19	-	-	800	42
1816	29	7	24%	-	-
1822	32	8	27%	3,000	94
1829	25	10	40%	3,700	148
1837	33	16	48%	4,000	121
1852	36	13	36%	3,800*	105
1862	22	14	64%	-	-

Sources: The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufacture, Vol.II, (1790), p.261; Baines, West Riding Directory (1822), loc.cit. White's West Riding Directories, (1837,1852,1862), loc.cit.; Rimmer, op.cit., pp.5, 127. The numbers of looms employed by weavers in the neighbouring hamlets who took out work from the Barnsley warehouses.

but the higher productivity due to this innovation probably more than compensated for the drop in the rate of entry of new manufacturers. The figures in Table 2.1, therefore, ought to be used with caution.

The evidence concerning the value of Barnsley's output of linen goods is very fragmented. In his West Riding Directory of 1822, Edward Baines says that at that time the town's manufacturers sent out thirty-six tons

* 800 of the looms were operated by steam power.

of linen goods every week, worth about £500 per ton. In other words, the annual output was about 1,872 tons of goods worth nearly £936,000.²⁵ In 1837 Barnsley was said to be producing annually an average of 220,000 pieces of 50 yards each, worth a million pounds.²⁶ Since the production figures for the two years are given in different units of measurement, it is impossible to compare them.

As regards the labour force, no accurate information is available for the period before 1841. As Table 1.1 above indicates, however, linen production was, by 1806, already the greatest single industry in terms of the proportion of the town's manpower it employed. It is estimated that in 1818 the handloom weavers in the town and its immediate environs numbered about 2,000.²⁷ The census figures of 1841 constitute an important breakthrough, though by 1841 the town's linen industry was already moving along the path of decline. In 1841, 2,613, or nearly 60 per cent of the town's labour force, worked in the linen industry.²⁸ It is almost certain that before the crises which began late in 1836 the proportion of linen workers approximated 70 per cent of the total labour force. The persistent crises led to even further declines during the 1840's and 1850's. Between 1852 and 1862 there was a decline both in the number of linen firms and in the number of weavers; the firms dropped from 36 to 22,²⁹ and the number of weavers from 3,111 to 1,988.³⁰ But in the same period the town's

²⁵ Baines, West Riding Directory (1822), op.cit., p.134.

²⁶ White, West Riding Directory (1837), op.cit., p.311.

²⁷ See Rimmer, op.cit., p.127; Wrights Leeds Intelligencer, Nov.9,1818, p.3.

²⁸ See Table 1.8 above.

²⁹ See Table 2.1 above.

³⁰ Compiled from the census books, 1851: H.O. 107/2332, 1861: R.G. 9/443-447. If the power weavers are excluded, the decline is even steeper. See Table 2.4 below.

population increased by 20 per cent, from 14,913 to 17,890. Despite some slight recovery during the cotton famine of the 1860's, the linen trade no longer dominated the life of Barnsley. Before going into the details of the decline, let us look at the organization of linen production.

II. The Organizational Structure of the Industry:

The function of a linen manufacturer broadly comprised three successive stages: the purchase of the yarn and other inputs, the weaving of the cloth, and disposing of the final product onto the market. Before the spinning revolution at Leeds, the Barnsley manufacturers obtained most of their yarn from the Continent, and the rest from hand-spinners at home. In 1812 John Marshall, who at that time was the largest machine spinner, supplied only a sixth of Barnsley's needs.³¹ With the entry of more power spinners towards the end of the wars and the development of wet-spinning at the end of the 1820's, Leeds managed to meet the needs of most of the Barnsley manufacturers. In 1839 when Leeds had fifty-nine mills making $1\frac{1}{2}$ million bundles of yarn a year, Barnsley consumed half of this yarn.³²

By the mid-1810's there had developed a fairly sophisticated system of linen yarn distribution which was similar to the situation in the cotton trade. The records of a Barnsley firm which went bankrupt in 1806 have made it possible for one to draw some conclusions concerning the purchase of yarn.³³ The Dearman brothers employed James Neville of Wigan as agent

³¹ Rimmer, op.cit., p.87.

³² Ibid., p.199.

³³ The Dearman Bankruptcy Papers, Cusworth Hall Museum, Doncaster. Accounts for the year 1800. Unfortunately, the collection is not yet catalogued.

in the purchase of yarn and the sale of cloth. Neville was mainly concerned with the purchase of hand-spun yarn especially in Lancashire. It seems that the Dearmans had direct contact with Ralph Turner, a Hull yarn merchant, who supplied them with Lithuanian and other Continental yarn. Before the Leeds spinners could supply all of Barnsley's needs, it was common for some Barnsley manufacturers to ride personally to Hull for the purchase of Continental yarn.³⁴

The development of mill-spinning at Leeds facilitated direct contacts, more often than not personal, between the spinners and the Barnsley manufacturers. John Marshall, for example, used to make regular sales promotion tours in Barnsley.³⁵ Most of the yarn which went up the Barnsley Canal from Leeds was ordered directly by some of the big manufacturers who either remitted payment with the orders or obtained credit from the spinners. The smaller manufacturers usually bought their yarn either from the local yarn merchants or from the yarn agents who acted as intermediaries between them and the spinners. The system of operating through the yarn merchants and the commission agents shielded the spinners from the trouble of dealing directly with too many small manufacturers, thus reducing both their administrative costs and the risk of payment defaults by their weaker customers.³⁶ In 1822 Barnsley had one yarn agent and no merchant.³⁷ By 1837 the town had three agents and two yarn merchants.³⁸ Some of the yarn agents and merchants engaged in other branches of the linen trade. Thus the firm of Mawer and Wilson, yarn merchants, carried out the manufacturing and bleaching

³⁴ See Wilkinson, Worthies, Families & Celebrities &c., op.cit., pp.75-77.

³⁵ Rimmer, op.cit., p.166.

³⁶ For similarity with the cotton industry, see Edwards, op.cit., pp.132-135.

³⁷ Baines's West Riding Directory (1822), op.cit., p.134.

³⁸ White's West Riding Directory (1837), op.cit., p.320. See Table 1.2 for the number of yarn merchants and agents in the subsequent period.

of linen as well.³⁹

As for the financing of yarn purchases, there were many ways, depending both on the circumstances of each manufacturer and on the period when the yarn was being purchased. If the time of the order coincided with the sale of his cloth, then he probably paid cash to the spinner, the agent or the merchant. But such coincidences were rare and, anyway, many short-term financial difficulties usually intervened. Most manufacturers, therefore, needed short- and medium-term credit facilities for 'circulating' or 'working' capital to pay the wages and buy the yarn.⁴⁰ To most manufacturers, credit facilities from one source or another were available. There were five possible sources of credit: banks, yarn merchants, spinners or their agents, and other personal or business contacts.⁴¹ The absence of linen business records renders it difficult to determine which was the most important source of credit for the manufacturers, though the Dearman bankruptcy papers give some indication of this. The Dearmans' biggest creditors were Joseph Beckett, a Barnsley banker, Ralph Turner, a Hull yarn merchant and Dr. Jonathan Binns, a Lancaster businessman.⁴²

³⁹Ibid., pp.316, 319, 320.

⁴⁰ See Seymour Shapiro, Capital and the Cotton Industry in the Industrial Revolution (New York, 1967), pp.79ff.

⁴¹ See Ibid., p.116; Stanley D. Chapman, The Cotton Industry in the Industrial Revolution, (Studies in Economic History series, 1972), pp.36-341. The Scottish manufacturers enjoyed the services of the British Linen Bank which was originally set up for that purpose: see Charles A. Malcolm, The History of the British Linen Bank (Edinburgh, 1950).

⁴² The Dearman Bankruptcy Papers, list of creditors and their submissions.

Banks were among the major sources of credit. Indeed the first bank in the town was opened in 1797 by Joseph Beckett, a linen manufacturer himself, who must have appreciated the need for such a facility in an up-and-coming industry. The Directories would indicate that the local banks increased from only two in 1822 to four in 1837.⁴³ The Act of 1826 which permitted the establishment of joint-stock banks of more than six partners outside a radius of 65 miles from London played an important part in the financing of industry.⁴⁴ In Barnsley, Beckett's bank soon became a joint-stock bank under a new name - the Wakefield and Barnsley Union Bank. In 1829 the Barnsley Savings Bank was founded and in 1832 a number of Barnsley industrialists and businessmen formed the Barnsley Banking Company which by 1836 had a paid up capital of £25,100.⁴⁵ A branch of the Bank of England opened in Leeds in 1827 to serve the West Riding industrial region by giving manufacturers access to the London discounting market where a lower rate was charged.⁴⁶ By discounting bills of exchange these banks did a great deal to provide manufacturers with circulating capital. The banks also provided medium and short-term credit. The flax spinners and their agents played a crucial role in the provision of credit for the purchase of yarn. Most of the Leeds spinners allowed the manufacturers six months' credit. Benyon and Company required that payment was made in four months from the date of invoice "by bill on London at two months." The customer was given a 5 per cent discount if he paid earlier, or charged interest at the same rate if he deferred payment.

⁴³ See Table 1.2 above.

⁴⁴ Antony John Topham, "The Credit structure of the West Riding Wool-Textile industry in the 19th century," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Leeds, 1953), p.12.

⁴⁵ Eli Hoyle, "History of Barnsley to 1850," (1880?, B.R.L.), p.281.

⁴⁶ Topham, op.cit., pp.17ff.

Messrs. Hives' and Atkinson's terms were the same, except that discount rate for earlier payment was 6 per cent and interest rate for deferred payment 5 per cent. The Marshalls and other big Leeds spinners offered credit on similar terms.⁴⁷

Before the advent of power-weaving in the 1840's wage and yarn costs constituted the bulk of the manufacturer's production costs. A very small proportion of his total outlay went to finance fixed capital. In fact the only items of fixed capital were: a warehouse, warping machinery and the more expensive hand-loom accessories, like shuttles, pickers, reeds and healds which the manufacturer loaned out to his weavers. From the rate books, it seems that few of the manufacturers actually owned their warehouses. The majority occupied the premises on a lease basis.

The most important stage of linen production was weaving which for most of the period of this study was a domestic industry. By the beginning of the 19th century linen weaving in Barnsley was no longer carried out on a 'Silas Marner' basis.⁴⁸ The self-employed weaver who bought a small quantity of yarn, wove it, and hawked his cloth about the country or sold it at the market, though a characteristic feature of the Irish linen industry,⁴⁹ was an anachronism in the Barnsley linen trade. There was a clear distinction between masters and men, reflected in the capitalistic pattern of employment relationships. The manufacturer was the central

⁴⁷ P.P. 1840 (43- 11), XXIII, part III, Assistant Commissioners' Report on the Handloom Weavers: Report of R.M. Muggeridge, p.710.

⁴⁸ See Thompson, op.cit., p.298.

⁴⁹ See Assist. Commissioners' Report of the Handloom Weavers, (1840), op.cit., pp.709-710 & W.T. Charley, "Linen," in G. Phillips Bevans (ed.) British Manufacturing Industries, Vol.5 (2nd ed. 1877), p.76.

figure in these relationships. He bought the yarn, distributed it among his weavers who wove the cloth in their own homes for an agreed wage. On completing a piece of cloth, a weaver would then take it back to his master's warehouse to receive payment. It was then up to the manufacturer to sell the cloth. This was the basic feature of the 'putting out' system of linen weaving.⁵⁰ The manufacturer's operations involved a great deal of fixed and floating capital which he had to acquire. The availability of complicated credit arrangements facilitated his operations in this respect. There was no doubt that he commanded the means of production. The domestic weaver, on the other hand, could only sell his labour power. Even ownership of a loom, for the minority who had them, did not make any appreciable difference. The more expensive loom accessories were usually rented from the manufacturer. More importantly, the raw material (the yarn) and the cloth which he wove belonged to the manufacturer. There was no chance that he would gain access to the sophisticated credit arrangements in the industry. The marketing arrangements were also getting complicated, especially as the manufacturers made inroads into the lucrative overseas markets. Silas Marner was dead. The proletarianization of the Barnsley linen weaver was complete by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The operational detail of this system, however, entailed complicated relationships.

Unlike the situation in the Coventry ribbon trade where the manufacturers lived in London, conducting their businesses through the medium of resident agents,⁵¹ the Barnsley linen manufacturers lived in the town. The very few

⁵⁰ For a clear, if oversimplified, exposition on the Barnsley 'outwork' system see: H.J. Mackenzie, The Story of Barnsley Linen, (Barnsley, 1949), p.6. Also, Civic Review, Aug. 1950 (publ. County Borough of Barnsley).

⁵¹ See Peter Searby, "Weavers and Freemen in Coventry, 1820-1861: Social and Political Traditionalism in an Early Victorian City." (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1972).

who lived outside were in such neighbouring villages as Dodworth, but had their warehouses in Barnsley where they conducted their businesses in person. As a result, not only did they maintain constant contact with their men but many of them participated in the town's public affairs.⁵² Although there is sparse information about them, we know enough to say that they were of differing means, power, and influence. This is best illustrated by the difference in the numbers of hands they employed. Whereas in 1861 Joseph Dinners employed a mere 48 individuals, John Pigott, a power-loom manufacturer, engaged 180 hands, and Thomas Taylor, by far the biggest manufacturer, employed more than 500 hands.⁵³

The weaving population was divided into four main categories: master-weavers, journeymen, apprentices and winders. The nomenclature is somehow misleading because the situation was different from the classical one. The master-weaver was not independent, for he was himself an employee of the manufacturer.⁵⁴ He was, as it were, the first hand who maintained direct contact with the manufacturer, agreed with him on the piece-rate, and took out work from the warehouse to his cottage. Only householders who owned or rented looms in their 'shops' were capable of being master-weavers. Looms in excess of one in the shop were worked by the master-weaver's journeymen and/or apprentices, some or all of whom were, in many cases, members of his own family. A number of parish apprentices were also engaged. Wives, aged relatives and, particularly, children aged between nine and thirteen, assisted in the dressing of the yarn: a two-part pre-weaving process. The dressing proper consisted in 'sizing' or

⁵² See Ch. One above, pp.58 & 64 and Chs. Four & Five below.

⁵³ 1861 Census books, P.R.O. R.G. 9/443 - 447; Lister, op.cit., p.582.

⁵⁴ Some historians prefer to call master weavers "first-hand journeymen". Their journeymen are then called "journeymen's journeyhands"; See Searby, op.cit., p.196.

the application of a film-forming paste of starch and lubricant to the warp to smooth down all its loose filaments, and to increase its tenacity. The next step was the winding of the yarn onto a beam in preparation for the actual weaving. Older children, like the adults, wove the cloth.⁵⁵

Table 2.2 is based on four 1841 enumeration districts corresponding roughly with area A in map number 6 and consisting of more than two-thirds of the town's weaving population. The area's 483 households headed by weavers are divided, on the one hand, into those in which only the heads were weavers and, on the other, those in which other members of the family (or families) were also weavers or winders. In more than a third of the households, wives, elderly relatives and, especially, children helped in cloth weaving and yarn dressing and winding. Most probably, the proportion was much bigger since it is likely that wives and children who worked part-time were recorded as unemployed dependants.

Table 2.2: Proportions of households in which wives & children wove/wound, 1841:

Enumeration District	Heads weaving alone or with outsiders		Head weaving with family	
	number	%	number	%
4	36	32	76	68
5	66	80	17	20
6	124	73	47	27
7	79	68	38	32

Compiled from 1841 census schedules, P.R.O. H.O.107/2332. The table excludes one-person households. It is important to note that some members of a household wove or wound for master-weavers in other households. From the census records it is not possible to distinguish between heads weaving alone and those weaving with outsiders.

⁵⁵ See Children's Employment Commission (mines, 1842), op.cit., report of Mr. Symons of Barnsley, pp.264-265.

If the journeymen, apprentices and winders were members of the family, the wages paid by the manufacturer constituted the family income over which, in all probability, the master-weaver exercised full control. If, on the other hand, they (the journeymen and others) were outsiders, then they received payment from the master-weaver. Deductions from journeymen's wages were made to cover loom rent, winding, use of reeds, gears, shuttles, pickers, brushes, candles and coal.⁵⁶ The employment system was, therefore, somewhat hierarchical and quite different from the popular image of a monolithic weaving community. In such a structure were inherent the forces of both unity and discord among the weavers. As colleagues who spent hours in the same shop every day, the master-weavers and their journeymen and apprentices developed a system of customary and functional relationships which bound them together. Their earning power primarily depended on the piece-rate offered by the manufacturers. It was, therefore, in the interest of the master-weavers, their journeymen and apprentices that the piece-rates were kept up. A manufacturer who reduced the rate, more often than not, provoked resentment or denunciation from all the three classes of weavers. Occasions of this nature usually brought out the Wilson Piece masses who thronged the May Day Green in mammoth protest demonstrations. On the other hand, the journeymen, who did not work their own looms, laboured, to a great extent, at the mercy of their master-weavers who could, and often did, make use of their positions to extort what was felt to be excessive deductions from the journeymen's wages. There were days when journeymen weavers complained of having "not the slightest control over the price of (their) labour." In slack times the master-weavers usually monopolised the little work available, giving none to their journeymen,

⁵⁶ Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit. Mr. Keyser on Barnsley, pp.479-480; The Leeds Mercury, Nov.21, 1818, p.3; The Northern Star, Oct.31, 1846, p.12.

especially if they were not members of their own families. At certain times the Barnsley journeymen saw themselves as being "completely crucified betwixt these labour monopolizers and the manufacturers."⁵⁷ It was this kind of friction that led to the formation of the Barnsley Friendship Society of Journeymen Weavers in November, 1846.⁵⁸

It is difficult to determine the relative proportions of master-weavers to journeymen- and apprentice-weavers over our period. One source has made it possible for one to track down the distribution of hand-loom in the Barnsley households in 1848. In that year there was a total of 2,622 hand-loom scattered in 762 cottages and tenements all over the township. The frequency of their distribution per cottage was as follows:⁵⁹

Number of looms per cottage	Number of cottages
1	40
2	145
3	121
4	403
5	1
6	52

In statistical language four looms per cottage was the 'mode'; in other words, cottages containing four looms each occurred most frequently. A loom census taken eight years earlier in the adjoining hamlet of Worsborough Common gives a closely similar picture:⁶⁰

⁵⁷ The Northern Star, Oct.31, 1846, p.3.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Nov.14, 1846, p.6.

⁵⁹ 'Barnsley Valuation List, 1848' (MS B.R.L.). The figures do not include the environs which were taken into consideration by the compilers of Directories.

⁶⁰ Compiled from a valuation list for Worsborough Common (1840) in the manuscript collection at the Cusworth Hall Museum, Doncaster.

Number of looms per cottage	Number of cottages
1	6
2	34
3	53
4	64
5	2
6	2
7	1

On the basis of the Barnsley township loom statistics of 1848 it is possible to hazard a guess at the proportion of first-hand weavers to the other categories. Assuming that the looms in each cottage were controlled by one master-weaver, we can conclude that in 1848 there were 762 master-weavers each of whom had under him an average of three to four journeymen and/or apprentices. But the situation is likely to have been complicated. On the one hand, it is possible (though remotely so), that some master weavers controlled looms in more than one cottage; on the other, it is conceivable, indeed very likely, that in some cottages there was more than one first-hand weaver in each. But a proportion of three journeymen to one master-weaver is a reasonable estimate.

The number of looms a master-weaver could accumulate in his shop depended on such factors as: the size of his shop, the amount of money he could raise to buy the looms, his ability to keep the looms employed by engaging apprentice- and journeymen-weavers with sufficient work from the manufacturer. It would appear that not all the first-hand weavers owned the looms in their shops. In their testimony before the 1838-40 Commission on the Handloom Weavers some first-hand weavers mentioned loom-rent as one of their working expenses.⁶¹ There is no way of telling

⁶¹ See, for example, the evidence of John Vallance, Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit., pp.480-481.

the proportion of loom ownership among the weavers at any point of our period. Loom ownership was likely to have been lower among fancy weavers who used the more expensive jacquard looms. The cost of looms in the Barnsley area is not known but the figures for Ireland should, at least, give us a hint. In 1840 the cost of an ordinary loom, including such accessories as reeds and healds, was from £2 - £3. Hiring one cost 10s. - 20s. a year. In Belfast the price of a jacquard loom ranged from £3.10s. to £10.⁶² A Barnsley manufacturer said to have advanced £200 to one of his weavers to buy a jacquard loom never got his money back:

"Naah, Mester, if yor neer badly afore aah pay that theer munie, yo'll hev rare good elth fer menny a year, en happen yo'll live for ivver."⁶³

In a trade beset with miserably low wages and a high incidence of unemployment the weavers' creditworthiness was, inevitably, very poor and, consequently, their employers were reluctant to give them credit for the purchase of such expensive items as jacquard looms. Quite a few fancy weavers, therefore, worked looms belonging to either the manufacturers or their undertakers. In the 1850's George Savage, described as a letter of jacquard looms, employed damask weavers on behalf of a manufacturing firm, Canter and Hyde.⁶⁴ It seems that the system of undertakers, whether for plain or fancy linen, was in greater use in the villages outside the township.

The Handloom Weavers' Commission reported the existence in Belfast of hand-loom factories, a novel system which had captured the interest of many linen manufacturers. They (the manufacturers) had found out that,

⁶² Ibid., Report of Mr. Otway on Ireland, pp.596 & 633.

⁶³ Cited in Thomas Tee's letter in a local paper, clipping in Wilkinson, "Local History", op.cit., p.110.

⁶⁴ Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.III, op.cit., p.31.

by bringing their weavers together under supervision, they increased their productivity. A Mr. Crouch from Belfast, who employed fifty-nine looms in his factory and gave out work to fifty looms, argued in favour of the factory system in these terms: "In the factory we get back our work in half the time ... that we get it back from our looms to which we give out work." Under this system, he also argued, the weavers could not embezzle the yarn.⁶⁵ But the weavers generally found factory weaving "exceedingly distasteful."⁶⁶ The same Royal Commission, however, reported nothing of the sort on the Barnsley linen trade. But this does not mean that hand-loom factories did not exist. Some of these are clearly described in the valuation lists. In the 1848 list, for example, we find that Thomas Taylor had a hand-loom weaving shed attached to his steam factory. Charles Tee and Son also had one next to their warehouse on Regent Street. Another firm, Jackson and Hodgets, had a large pattern weaving shop adjacent to their warehouse on Church Street; and George Savage, who undertook work for Canter and Hyde, superintended work in damask weaving shops on Doncaster Road.⁶⁷ The system, however, was apparently not widespread. Perhaps two explanations can be suggested. The first was the weavers overt hostility to such a system as the Irish evidence shows, and the second was the large space required for such a system - a system, therefore, which was bound to increase the capital outlay of a manufacturer. Domestic weaving remained the characteristic feature of hand-loom production in Barnsley. The foregone discussion clearly demonstrates the fact that there was a wide spectrum of grades of hand-loom

⁶⁵ Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit., p.634.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.716.

⁶⁷ "A Valuation of Rateable Property in the Township of Barnsley, 1848", (MS., B.R.L.).

weavers.

Of the Irish linen weavers, Assistant Commissioner, C.G. Otway, could still say in 1840: "No weaver thinks of supporting himself by his loom; he has always a piece of oats, a patch of flax, and a grass of weeds for a cow: thus his time is divided between his farm and his loom."⁶⁸ Otway was, of course, referring to the rural and semi-rural linen centres because, by 1840, in urban areas like Belfast the largest body of weavers were full-time 'cottier' weavers.⁶⁹ It is likely that some of the weavers from the outlying townships and villages who worked for the Barnsley masters divided their time between their farms and their looms, especially in the earlier years of the linen trade. The juxtaposition in these villages of agricultural labourers with hand-loom weavers in the 1841 census schedules is suggestive of such a phenomenon.⁷⁰ Within the township of Barnsley the hamlet of Kingston Place consisted of seventeen weavers' cottages, each with a four-loom shop and a garden attached to it. There were also six such cottages on Race Common Road.⁷¹ But, to all intents and purposes, these areas belonged to rural Barnsley, since they were located outside the 'improvement zone'. The impression which one takes to the descriptions in the valuation lists and the rate books is that the real weavers' strongholds in the 'improvement zone', like Wilson's Piece or Taylor's Row or Copper Street, consisted of rows upon rows of weavers' cottages with hardly any space, not to mention gardens, between them. The bulk of the weavers plied their looms full-time - or went on the dole when there was no work.⁷²

⁶⁸ Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit., p.594.

⁶⁹ See Ibid., p.712.

⁷⁰ For example in Dodworth, Ardsley, or Monk Bretton, P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

⁷¹ A Valuation of Rateable Property, 1848 (MS., B.R.L.).

⁷² Ibid. and the different rate books in the B.R.L.

Powerloom factories started going up in the late 1830's and operated side by side with the domestic weaving system. The pattern of employment was, of course, radically different. The weavers and other factory workers worked directly under the manufacturer; there was no undertaking or journeywork system. Subjected to a new kind of discipline, the factory weavers lost their previous freedom which they had enjoyed under the cottage system where they had been used to weaving, more or less at their own pace.⁷³ The innovation also brought about large-scale employment of women and children in the factories because they constituted cheap labour. In 1861, 290, or 58 per cent, of the 500 power-loom weavers were females.⁷⁴ In the factory the division of labour was elaborate. There was the manager who controlled the whole establishment. Under him were the overseers of different departments of the factory. Although the bulk of the factory workers were the power-loom weavers, there were other categories like: yarn dressers, bobbin winders, card-lacers, bunt-pickers, technicians and general labourers.⁷⁵

The weavers in both the domestic and the factory systems were remunerated under the piece-rate system whereby a weaver completed a prescribed piece of linen for an agreed rate of pay. The rate primarily depended on the kind of product to be woven: whether it was plain or fancy, light or heavy and so on.⁷⁶ For most of the period of this study there was a

⁷³ The literature on the new factory discipline is abundant. See, for example, Sidney Pollard, The Genesis of Modern Management (1965), Ch.5; Neil Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution (1960, reprint); Edward P. Thompson, "Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," in Past and Present, No.38, (Dec. 1967), pp.56-97.

⁷⁴ Compiled from P.R.O., R.G.9/3443-47.

⁷⁵ The catalogue of occupations comes from the census books: P.R.O., R.G.9/443-447.

⁷⁶ See below, pp.142-144. For similarity with the cotton industry, see Bythell, The Handloom Weavers, op.cit., Ch.II: with the silk industry, see Searby, op.cit., Ch.II.

standard list of prices agreed between the manufacturers and the weavers and operating throughout the town and its environs. During the hey-day of the Barnsley linen trade, especially in the 1830's, the Barnsley price list served as 'reference' rates for other linen centres like Leeds and Knaresborough.⁷⁷ The impact of the power-loom on the unitary price list is difficult to measure but there is evidence that the rates were invariably lower in the power-loom branch.⁷⁸ The standard piece-rate system protected the weavers in a glutted labour market from undercutting each other's price for his labour. In fact, enforcing adherence to the price list turned out to be the only effective method of collective bargaining among the weavers. The attitude of the manufacturers to the system of standard prices depended both on the circumstances of each manufacturer and on the period in which a list was operating. During the boom of 1835-36, for example, when there was a shortage of weavers for common fabrics, many manufacturers found the list an insurance against a 'wage war' and cut-throat competition for labour. But during most of the period, many manufacturers found the standard list rather inhibiting as it denied them the opportunity to reduce their labour costs, especially if they felt it justified either by a fall in the price of linen goods or by their own innovatory investments. From the early 1840's most of the disputes in the industry involved many manufacturers who decided to break with the standard price list.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Report on the Handloom Weavers, (1840), op.cit., pp.476, 478 & 484.

⁷⁸ See below, p.122.

⁷⁹ See Chapter Six, Section VII, below.

Weaving was not the final stage of linen production. Some woven pieces had to be calendered, or finished by drawing each piece between two rollers. If the cloth had been woven from unbleached yarn, it had to be bleached before it was sold to the consumer. Some kinds of linen were dyed or printed in their final form. The processes of bleaching, dyeing, printing or calendering were not necessarily integral parts of a manufacturing establishment. In fact, most of them were run as separate enterprises, acting as service industries to the manufacturing industry and either charging a commission for their service or buying unprocessed cloth from the manufacturers. Some manufacturers, however, combined linen weaving with other processes especially bleaching. In 1837 four of the town's nine bleachers were also manufacturers.⁸⁰ In 1852 three of the four bleachers were manufacturers as well.⁸¹ Some of the 'service industries' were quite large, employing scores of hands. The Spencer family, which went into business in the 1840's, operated a large establishment, the Hope Works, which from the beginning combined the processes of linen and cotton bleaching, calendering and printing. Before the establishment of the Hope Works, the printing of linen was done in Lancashire.⁸² In 1851, when the Spencers' business was in its infancy, it employed as many as forty hands.⁸³ In 1878 the Hope Works, which then combined the operations of spinning, bleaching, weaving, calendering and printing, was described as the largest of its kind in the world.⁸⁴ The Barnsley 'servicing' establishments were so important that large quantities of linen fabrics were sent from as far away as Scotland and Ireland to be bleached and

⁸⁰ White's West Riding Directory (1837), op.cit., pp.316-317, 319.

⁸¹ Ibid, (1852), pp.599, 601.

⁸² Ibid, p.595.

⁸³ P.R.O. H.O.107/2332.

⁸⁴ Mechanics Inst. (publ.), An Account of Barnsley etc., op.cit., p.6.

finished on "the Barnsley principle".⁸⁵

The marketing of the linen cloth took so many forms that it needs some detailed treatment. In the earlier years of our period, before chemical bleaching attained perfection, a combination of chemical and grass bleaching which took anything up to three months, was in use. Many manufacturers who wanted to avoid possible risks preferred to sell brown, or unbleached, linen to big merchants who had their own bleachworks, especially in London and Manchester.⁸⁶ But from the 1820's there was a progressive improvement in both the mechanical and chemical processes of bleaching until by the second half of the century yarn was "handed to the whitster one day and to the weaver the next."⁸⁷ Because of such improvements, an increasingly large number of manufacturers sold bleached linen.

The marketing arrangements varied according to the circumstances of the different manufacturers. Since the evidence is fragmentary, it is not possible to state how many firms used which arrangement, but what is possible is a categorization of the methods of marketing the cloth. Some manufacturers sold their cloth to the local bleachers, dyers or calenders who then prepared it for the market. It seems, however, that the majority

⁸⁵ Burland's Annals of Barnsley, Vol.III, op.cit., p.59. Although the town's manufacturing branch was said to be depressed in 1855, bleaching and calendering were booming, on account of the linen fabrics sent from Scotland and Ireland to be bleached and finished in Barnsley, Idem.

⁸⁶ See Green, op.cit., p.73. For the development of linen bleaching technology see Carter, op.cit., p.17; Warden, op.cit., pp.716-723; Enid Gauldie, "Mechanical Aids to Linen Bleaching in Scotland," in Textile History, Vol.I (1968-70), pp.129-157. The point that the slow linen bleaching constituted a serious bottleneck is made in Rimmer, op.cit., pp.51-53.

⁸⁷ Citing: Burland, "Social & Scenic Pictures of Barnsley in the 18thc," op.cit., n.p. (B.R.L.). See also Charley, op.cit., pp.102ff.

of the manufacturers disposed of their linen onto the market themselves, but in differing ways. The smaller manufacturers either sold it to local drapers or hired 'riders-out' who travelled about the countryside looking for orders from provincial drapers or actually hawking the linen.⁸⁸

The above seems to have been the predominant pattern until the 1820's. In fact, a number of manufacturers started off themselves as manufacturers' travelling agents.⁸⁹ Although the provincial drapers constituted an important part of the linen market, the crucial centres were London and Manchester where linen, cotton, wool and silk merchants maintained large warehouses. Most of the linen cloth, especially that which went to the overseas markets, went through these two places, London being 'the arbiter of taste and fashion' and Manchester the great emporium of the British clothing trade.⁹⁰ Many Barnsley manufacturers had direct contact with the linen merchants in the two centres. Some manufacturers were deeply involved in the marketing of their own linen. In the 1822 Directory we see that Thomas Wilson, manufacturer, ran his own drapery.⁹¹ In 1847 the firm Richardson, Tee and Rycroft opened a warehouse in Manchester; in September 1872 they established another one in London. In fact, one of the partners, Thomas Tee, concentrated on the running of these warehouses.⁹² Still some manufacturers had direct contacts with overseas customers.⁹³

⁸⁸ For the number of linen drapers, see Table 1.2 above.

⁸⁹ See below, pp.150-151.

⁹⁰ On the importance of Manchester and London and the similarity between linen and cotton, see Edwards, op.cit., pp.147-181; Chapman, The Cotton Industry in the Industrial Revolution, op.cit., pp.48-49.

⁹¹ Baines, West Riding Directory (1822), op.cit., p.137.

⁹² The Barnsley Chronicle, June 6, 1873. White's West Riding Directory, (1852), op.cit., p.601; Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary," (MS and cuttings, B.R.L.); Idem., "Local History", op.cit., p.113.

⁹³ The Dearman Bankruptcy Papers, debtors' claims: Wordsworth of Jamaica.

III. Innovations in Linen Production:

Two interrelated aspects of innovation are relevant in the context of this discussion: innovations in the quality of the cloth and in the methods of weaving, the latter promoted by the development of the loom. All the general accounts of the Barnsley linen trade state that about 1810 many manufacturers who had earlier produced common heavy fabrics, like sheetings, began to weave finer and more expensive linens.⁹⁴ There seems to be no satisfactory explanation for such a development at this time, though one could hazard a guess. A likely improvement in the quality of the loom may have facilitated the weaving of finer products. Also, with increasing competition among the manufacturers of heavy linen, the profit margins probably declined, forcing the more enterprising manufacturers to try and capture a new market. It will be recalled that the 1810's saw the most dramatic expansion in the Barnsley linen trade.⁹⁵

The next major development was the production of fancy goods which reached a climax in the boom of the 1830's. Barnsley gained world-wide fame for its fancy drills, damasks and diapers. Drills were mainly exported for light wear in such warm places as Spain, Italy, the Far East, the West Indies and the Americas.⁹⁶ They were worn in vestings, trousers, jackets and ladies' dresses.⁹⁷ In 1837 William Harvey & Co., William Micklet^h_hwaite, and Charles Tee, three of the town's larger firms, specialised

⁹⁴ See above, p.90.

⁹⁵ See above, p.91.

⁹⁶ Batho, op.cit., p.43.

⁹⁷ White's West Riding Directory (1852), op.cit., p.595.

in the weaving of fancy drills.⁹⁸ Damask, another kind of fancy linen, was once described as "the pride of Barnsley."⁹⁹ It was used for satins, brocades, window curtains and, mainly, table linen. Damask for table linen, a highly luxury product, was a favourite of royal personages and the nobility in general. Orders for damask are said to have come from as far away as Russia.¹⁰⁰ Diaper linen, with a square or diamond pattern, was used chiefly for table linen, napkins and towels.

The prosperity of the fancy linen trade was due to the adaptation of the jacquard device to linen weaving. The ordinary shaft loom was adequate for plain (or tabby) weaving and for simply patterned fabrics; but a more complex loom was necessary for intricately figured fabrics. The 'draw-loom' used for such weaving since the 18th century was unsatisfactory because it required the employment of assistants called 'draw-boys', and took a very long time to produce a required pattern.¹⁰¹ Its costs in terms of labour and time were so prohibitive that few manufacturers dared venture to invest in it. The jacquard loom provided the answer. Invented in 1801 and improved in 1805 by a Frenchman after whom the device was called, the jacquard was first used in linen weaving in the 1820's.¹⁰² In the Scottish linen industry it was introduced in 1825.¹⁰³ John Bolton, who claims credit for its introduction into Barnsley, does not mention

⁹⁸ Ibid. (1837), p.319.

⁹⁹ The Barnsley Chronicle, June 28, 1902.

¹⁰⁰ Green, op.cit., p.80.

¹⁰¹ See Ibid., p.79.

¹⁰² Parallel investments in the jacquard occurred roughly at the same time in the other textiles. They were probably stimulated by the boom of the mid-1820's. See Searby, op.cit., p.35.

¹⁰³ Bremner, op.cit., p.241.

any specific date, although, by inference, it seems to have been about 1830.¹⁰⁴ Before the mid-1830's, anyway, the jacquard was in general use in Barnsley.

The scope of fancy patterns made by the jacquard loom was unlimited. Whereas in the 'draw' system the pattern was brought out by moving units of four or five threads at a time, in the jacquard system every thread of warp and weft played a part in the design, for each went through an 'eye' attached to a harness controlled by the jacquard device above the loom. The 'eyes' on a perforated card were patterned according to a required design. The design was first drawn on paper and then transferred onto a card by punching holes into the card, the holes in each card representing one throw of the shuttle. As many as 50,000 cards are known to have been used in making a piece of damask.¹⁰⁵ Designing a pattern was very expensive; some patterns are said to have cost as much as £50 each to produce.¹⁰⁶ As a result pattern designing developed as an independent branch of the trade, involving professional designers who set up businesses in their own right. In 1837 there were three such pattern designers in Barnsley, including John Bolton himself.¹⁰⁷ Fancy weavers were in the minority but because of the high value of their products, they got better wages and contributed considerably to the economy of the town. In 1818, before the jacquard loom was introduced in linen weaving,

¹⁰⁴ John Bolton, Personal Narrative of 24 Years' Residence in Barnsley, (Ulverton, 1870). Bolton says that just as he was about to introduce the jacquard, there occurred an "aggravated and dangerous turn-out" among the weavers. This is a reference to the 1829 general strike - see Ch. Six below, pp.325-340.

¹⁰⁵ H.J. Mackenzie, The Story of Barnsley Linen, (Barnsley, 1949), p.19; Bremner, op.cit., pp.241-244; Warden, op.cit., p.706.

¹⁰⁶ The Barnsley Chronicle, June 28, 1902.

¹⁰⁷ White's West Riding Directory, (1837), op.cit., p.319.

Britain exported only 18,058 yards of damasks and diapers, constituting 0.1 per cent of the total linen exports. They fetched £2,979, or 0.2 per cent of the total earnings from linen sold overseas. In 1836, at the height of jacquard weaving, exports of damasks and diapers amounted to 108,274 yards, or 0.2 per cent of the linen exports, which fetched £38,041 - 1.6 per cent of the overseas earnings from linen.¹⁰⁸ These two fancy products had increased their share of the overseas market. There were also new patterned products like fancy drills and hollands.

Linen weaving by power ushered in a new era. The structure of the industry as a whole changed; greater diversity in the weaving and manufacturing populations was introduced; labour productivity was greatly enhanced; and the decline of the hand-loom weaver was accelerated. Even in cotton weaving where it was invented, the power-loom took a long time before it overcame some technical shortcomings, and even longer still before it went into general use. The 1825-26 investment boom boosted it up and by 1835 it had, we are told, gained ascendancy over the hand-loom.¹⁰⁹ In linen weaving the power-loom was much of a late-comer. This can be illustrated by the difference between cotton manufacturing Preston and linen weaving Barnsley in as late a year as 1841. Whereas there was hardly a power-loom weaver in Barnsley at this time, Preston had a ratio

¹⁰⁸ P.R.O., Cust.9/6 & 23. In both years the linen trade was in a boom.

¹⁰⁹ Chapman, op.cit., pp.18, 25-34; Baines, History of the Cotton Manufacture, op.cit., pp.235-239; Bythell, op.cit., Ch.4.

of 3 hand-loom weavers to 10 power-loom weavers.¹¹⁰ One of the major obstacles to the weaving of linen by power was the nature of the flax fibre. Cotton, and to some extent silk and wool fibres, have considerable elasticity; but a linen thread will break if extended one thirty-sixth of its length.¹¹¹ In the 1820's some linen manufacturers in Dundee and Aberdeen invested in power weaving but they achieved only very limited successes and were, in fact, forced to lay their experiments aside.¹¹² It was not until the 1830's, when the 'vibrating roller' was invented that a breakthrough was achieved in linen power-weaving. The vibrating roller kept an even tension upon the warp, thus preventing it from breaking.¹¹³ But technical difficulties imposed by the inelasticity of the flax fibre, formidable as they were, were not the only obstacle. After all, there were similar difficulties in spinning. Even where a project is technologically viable, a potential investor needs to look at the market prospects. In the face of stiff competition from cotton, linen producers operated in a relatively contracting market. Productivity accruing from the employment of power-looms would have to be high enough to offset the effects of low sales. This is not a problem that flax spinners encountered, for, while a power weaver was 4 to 5 times more productive than his hand counterpart, a power-spinner was 380 times more productive than the hand-spinner!¹¹⁴ What better explanation can we give for a longer transition period from hand to power in weaving than in spinning?

¹¹⁰ Kenneth M. Spencer, "A Social and Economic Geography of Preston, 1800-1865," (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1968), p.71.

¹¹¹ Warden, op.cit., p.710.

¹¹² Ibid; Bremner, op.cit., p.249.

¹¹³ See Gill, op.cit., p.326.

¹¹⁴ Charley, op.cit., p.94.

From the late 1830's, however, investment in linen power-looms gained momentum. In 1835 there were 41 such looms in England; by 1850 they had risen to 1,131, of which 911 were in Yorkshire.¹¹⁵

James Cocker was the first Barnsley manufacturer to erect power-driven looms in 1836. A newspaper reporter who visited Cocker's factory in December that year gave a bleak description of it. He learned that it took a weaver four days to complete a 3s. piece, which was even worse than in almost all the branches of hand weaving. Cocker's scheme was losing him more than £7 a week, and in 1840 his business folded up.¹¹⁶ But during the early 1840's superior power-loom factories started going up in the town, for example that of Thomas Taylor and Sons at the beginning of 1844. By 1848 there were five such factories with a total annual rental value of £1,831, as Table 2.3 shows.

Table 2.3: Linen Power-loom Factories, 1848.

Factory Owner	Location	Annual Rental Value	Rateable Value
1. Pigott & Newton	Race Common Road	£450	£450
2. Robert Craik	Old Mill	£172	£125
3. Henry Richardson	Bore Spring Road	£177	£147
4. Thomas Taylor & Sons	Shambles Street	£816	£680
5. Thomas Richardson & Co.	Dodworth Road	£216	£180

Compiled from the "Barnsley Valuation List, 1848" (MS. B.R.L.)

¹¹⁵ Gill, op.cit., p.329. At this time Scotland had 2,529 linen power-looms: Idem.

¹¹⁶ The Leeds Times, Dec.3, 1836, p.3. Also, Goodchild, op.cit., n.p.

By the end of our period in 1856 only one more factory (Carter Brothers) had been built.¹¹⁷ The serious linen trade slumps of the 1850's were largely responsible for the slow down in the investment in power-loom.¹¹⁸

At this juncture, there is need to examine two key issues in connection with the development of power weaving: the relative numbers of weavers on power- and hand-loom and the relative proportions of total output attributable to each sector over time. As a corollary, what was the impact of the power-loom on the productivity of labour? Fortunately, in the census enumerations from 1851 onwards a clear distinction was made between power- and hand-loom weavers as is shown in Table 2.4. It shows a marked decline in the number of hand-loom weavers from 1851, the most rapid decline occurring between 1851 and 1861. By 1871 the town had less than half the 1851 number of hand-loom weavers. This phenomenal drop in the hand-weaving population occurred in the period when the population of the town increased by 54 per cent from 14,913 in 1851 to 23,021 in 1871.¹¹⁹

Table 2.4: Power- and Hand-loom Weavers, 1851-1871:

Census Year	Hand-loom Weavers		Power-loom Weavers	
	number	proportion of weaving population	number	proportion of weaving population
1851	2,641	85%	470	15%
1861	1,488	75%	500	25%
1871	1,109	65%	604	35%

Compiled from P.R.O. H.O.107/2332; R.G.9/443-447; R.G.10/4644-4648. The 1851 figures are not entirely accurate because records for two of the sixteen enumeration districts were destroyed. The figures in the table are extrapolated from the available statistics.

¹¹⁷ See Table 1.3 above, and Lister, op.cit., pp.581-582.

¹¹⁸ See below, pp.135ff.

¹¹⁹ Census Abstracts (H.M.S.O.). There seems to have been a slight readjustment in the boundaries of the enumeration area in 1871, but this should not affect the argument.

Although the number of power-loom weavers increased during the period, the increase was very moderate. In fact, the overall picture emerging from these figures underscores a serious decline in the Barnsley linen trade as a whole which began during the Crimean War. What happened over these twenty years was not so much a replacement of hand weaving by power weaving as a general deterioration of the industry in which the power-loom was more resilient than the hand-loom.¹²⁰

As to the relative proportions of total output attributable to the power-loom, there is not enough evidence to quantify it accurately at any point of the period. In 1852 the number of power-loom was estimated at 800 as compared to about 3,000 hand-loom in the town and neighbourhood.¹²¹ We know from other evidence that a linen power-loom produced about 120 yards a week, at least twice as much as a hand-loom.¹²² On the basis of this, and knowing as we do that most of the hand-loom were usually partially employed, the power-loom, owned by a fifth of the manufacturers and employing a tenth of the weaving population, produced probably more than half of the town's total linen output in 1852. The power-loom weaver was about four times as productive as his counterpart on the hand-loom, since the former operated two looms, each producing twice as much cloth as the hand-loom.¹²³ This might even be a serious underestimate of the power-loom weaver's productive superiority because he had better prospects of regular employment. The power-loom manufacturer, incurring high fixed costs,

¹²⁰ See the next section below.

¹²¹ White's West Riding Directory (1852), op.cit., p.595.

¹²² Carter, op.cit., p.16.

¹²³ Although the statement is based on the Irish evidence, the Barnsley situation does not appear to have been any different. See Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit., 484.

might, indeed usually did, prefer to run his factory even during a trade recession. But the early generations of power-loom produced plain, heavy linens. The improvement in the quality of the power-loom, enabling it to weave fine and fancy goods was not achieved until the mid-1850's.¹²⁴

How did the power-loom affect the unitary price list which the hand-loom weavers so pertinaciously fought to maintain? Were the rates to be the same in both hand and power weaving, the power weaver would have earned four to five times as much as the hand weaver. But this was not so. The factory owners were anxious that their new investments earn them a reduction in their labour costs. In 1846 a price list for the power-loom weavers was first agreed upon between the masters and the men. The average rate for the adult males was estimated at just above a third of the average rate in hand weaving.¹²⁵ The rates for women and children were, of course, lower - though the proportion is not known for certain. As we saw above, more than half of the power-loom weavers in 1861 were females.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ "Half a Century of Progress in Barnsley," (cuttings from the Barnsley Chronicle, June 1887, B.R.L.); Warden, op.cit., p.385.

¹²⁵ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," Vol.II, op.cit., p.442.

¹²⁶ Supra, p.109.

In spite of the obvious threat of power to hand weaving, there does not seem to have been discernible opposition among the hand-loom weavers to the power-loom.¹²⁷ There was no 'Luddism', and there was nothing like what happened in the Coventry ribbon trade where some weavers installed 'a-la-bar' looms in "cottage factories" to compete with the new power-loom factories.¹²⁸ For all their militancy, the Barnsley weavers seem to have taken the new development in their stride. One may suggest two possible explanations. First, at the time when linen power weaving was being introduced, the power-loom factory had triumphed in the other textiles, especially in cotton. Some of the linen hand weavers were themselves refugees from cotton. The weavers may have been realistic enough to appreciate that it was no use fighting a losing battle. Secondly, the bleak prospects of the linen trade could not have acted as an incentive for them to invest in any equivalent of the Coventry a-la-bar loom.

IV. Fluctuations, Distress and Decline:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the United Kingdom manufactured about 100 million yards of linen cloth a year. In the next fifty years production rose fourfold; the volume of domestic sales increased five times and exports nearly trebled.¹²⁹ This upward trend,

¹²⁷ Some fears were expressed about the cotton power-loom which, it was alleged, was causing handloom weavers to flock into linen weaving: See Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit., p.477.

¹²⁸ See Searby, op.cit., pp.201-205.

¹²⁹ Rimmer, op.cit., p.239.

however, was punctuated, at national and local levels, by cyclical and other crises characterized by cutbacks in production and concomitant unemployment. In fact, some of the forces responsible for such fluctuations subjected the industry to a long and agonizing decline in the second half of the century.

Seven factors, most of them closely interconnected, can be identified as having been responsible for the fluctuations in the linen trade. Naturally, the degree to which each affected the industry differed over the period. The general economic depressions, affecting both the capital and commodity markets and leading to business failures, were largely responsible for the most traumatic crises in the industry. Weavers' strikes, more often than not connected with the trade depressions, also adversely affected the industry. A third factor was overseas events, mainly wars and tariffs; the former blocked markets, shipment and raw material supplies, and the latter interfered with the cloth markets. Then there were fluctuations in demand according to the annual seasons. In winter months demand for light apparel linen dropped. The fancy goods were subjected to the caprices of the fashion-conscious consumer which sometimes led to serious drops in orders for such goods as fancy drills. Competition from linen produced elsewhere also caused problems. Many manufacturers blamed the difficulties of the late 1820's on the lowering of tariffs in 1823-25 which exposed them to foreign, especially German, competition.¹³⁰ Whereas in 1825 Britain imported £33,114 worth of linen

¹³⁰ The Leeds Mercury, Oct. 3, 1929, p.3.

goods, only three years later in 1828 her linen imports were worth £68,834.¹³¹ By the 1850's the Irish linen industry, which had caught up in both technology and organization, and also had the advantage of cheap labour and cheap home-grown flax, posed a serious threat to English linen. But all these factors were not peculiar to linen as they applied to all the other textiles. Competition from cotton was responsible, in the long term, for the greater part of linen's troubles and, in a large measure, for its eventual decline. Whereas in the first half of the 19th century the United Kingdom per capita consumption of cotton rose quickly, that of linen remained fairly constant. During the 1850's, however, the domestic market for home produced linens shrank to half its former size, but at the same time the per capita consumption of cotton goods doubled. At the beginning of the century roughly twice as much cotton cloth was sold in the domestic market as linen cloth. By the 1860's the difference was elevenfold.¹³² It was not until the cotton famine of the 1860's that linen gained temporary recovery.

Cotton was able to outsell linen because it was cheaper. From the beginning of the century it made greater inroads into the linen market at home. Between 1825 and 1842, when linen prices are known to have been on a general upward trend, cotton prices fell by a third.¹³³ Always technologically ahead of linen, cotton had the advantage of lower production costs. In time also the cotton manufacturers were able to improve the

¹³¹ P.R.O. Cust.5/14 & 18. Given the short time between the two years, it would appear that the difference was more due to higher imports in the latter year than to price inflation.

¹³² See Rimmer, loc. cit.

¹³³ Ibid., p.164.

quality of their products so that by the mid-century goods like ticks, ducks, handkerchiefs, sheetings and even drills were more cheaply produced and better coloured in cotton. Also, cotton as a raw material was much cheaper than flax because whereas the former was a product largely of cheap slave labour, the latter was an expensive, labour-intensive European peasant crop which became scarcer as the European countries industrialised.¹³⁴ Only a very restricted range of linen goods, especially the so-called household 'decencies', managed to withstand King Cotton's onslaught.

The Barnsley linen trade emerged from the Napoleonic wars with considerable strength. Early in 1814 the weavers had secured a general advance in their wages averaging about 1s. per bunt.¹³⁵ But soon the industry was hit by the downswing which began late in 1815 and deepened in 1816.¹³⁶ Stocks of goods at the warehouses accumulated "to a frightful extent".¹³⁷ Although the manufacturers continued to hand out work to their weavers in the hope that the recession was very temporary, they reduced the wages substantially and made an attempt in 1816 to withdraw the weavers' fents.¹³⁸ But by 1818 the industry had fully recovered; only to be upset by another recession in 1819. Although employment was short, there was apparently

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp.242ff.

¹³⁵ Eli Hoyle, History of Barnsley and the Surrounding District (unpublished printed vol., B.R.L.), p.229.

¹³⁶ See A.D. Gayer, W.W. Rostow, A.J. Schwartz, The Growth and Fluctuations of the British Economy (1953), Vol.I, p.110.

¹³⁷ Reminiscence in Wright's Leeds Intelligencer, Nov.2, 1818, p.3.

¹³⁸ Report on the Handloom Weavers (1940), op.cit., pp.480-481; on the fents, see Chapter Six, Section III, below.

no reduction in the wage rates. The general economic recovery which began in 1822 and reached a peak in 1825 created an atmosphere of prosperity in the linen trade.¹³⁹ Early in 1825 the Barnsley weavers, wanting to partake of the prosperity, demanded a wage increase and, though not before a series of strikes, obtained it.¹⁴⁰ The financial panic of December 1825 leading to a depression in 1826¹⁴¹ seriously ruined the linen trade. United Kingdom flax imports in 1826 fell by a third of the 1825 figure, and those coming in through Hull, the major port for Barnsley and Leeds overseas supplies, fell from 11,856 tons in 1825 to 6,701 tons in 1826.¹⁴² The Knaresborough linen industry was permanently crippled from that year; most of its weavers immigrated into Barnsley and swelled the army of the town's unemployed. From May to August, 1826 about 784 persons were relieved every week at the cost of £31. The relief scheme ended owing to the lack of funds.¹⁴³ The alarmed Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding expressed fears that "remedy, or even alleviation, appear hopeless from resources to which recourse can locally be had."¹⁴⁴

But it was the depression of 1829 that was to cause deep human misery and bitter industrial strife.¹⁴⁵ The value of British linen exports fell from £1,513,343 in 1828 to £1,394,336 in 1829.¹⁴⁶ In Barnsley one of the largest bleachworks, the Beever Hall Bleachworks, received 60,151 less

¹³⁹ See Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, op.cit., p.171.

¹⁴⁰ Hoyle, op.cit., p.41. See Ch. Six, Section IV below.

¹⁴¹ Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, loc.cit.

¹⁴² Warden, op.cit., p.112; Rimmer, op.cit., p.163.

¹⁴³ "Report of the Barnsley Committee for the Relief of the Unemployed workmen", Cusworth Hall Museum.

¹⁴⁴ Earl Harewood to Robert Peel, Aug.1, 1826, P.R.O., H.O.40/19.

¹⁴⁵ For the 1829 trade disputes see Chapter Six, Section V below. For the causes of the 1829 depression see Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, op.cit., p.173. For the crisis in the ribbon trade see Searby, op.cit., p.95; in the cotton trade, Bythell, op.cit., p.89.

¹⁴⁶ P.R.O., Cust.9/15 & 16.

bundles of yarn in 1829 than in the previous year.¹⁴⁷ The impact of the depression was felt by May. On May 22 a Sheffield paper reported, "The linen trade at Barnsley was never known to be worse, and distress is strongly depicted in the appearance of the unemployed artizans."¹⁴⁸ It was presumed that a third of the estimated 4,000 looms in the town and the vicinity were standing idle.¹⁴⁹ Towards the end of the month some manufacturers began to pay less than the standard prices. In June the old standard price list collapsed, the weavers having yielded to a reduction. In August the manufacturers issued a new price list representing a further reduction of about 10 per cent.¹⁵⁰ The collapse of the price list generated a bitter conflict which will be discussed in detail later.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, unemployment was taking its toll. On June 29, 500 unemployed weavers marched to Wentworth House to apply for relief from Earl Fitzwilliam who obliged with a £25 grant and a promise for further aid.¹⁵² In August the Weavers' Committee sought to enlighten the public on the seriousness of their plight by publishing comprehensive statistics of unemployed looms in the town and neighbourhood. Out of the total 3,713 looms, only 170 were working at full capacity; 1,699 were only partially employed; and the remaining 1,944 were at a complete standstill.¹⁵³ On September 2 a number

¹⁴⁷ Jackson, op.cit., p.146.

¹⁴⁸ The Sheffield Courant, May 22, 1829, p.374.

¹⁴⁹ The Leeds Intelligencer, May 14, 1829, p.3; The Leeds Mercury, May 16, 1829, p.2. The Leeds Intelligencer reported gloom also in Leeds, Manchester, Burnley, Bolton, Blackburn, Macclesfield, Huddersfield, Leicester and Paisley.

¹⁵⁰ The Leeds Mercury, June 6, 1829, p.3; Sept.5, 1829, p.5. The Leeds Intelligencer, Sept.10, 1829, p.3.

¹⁵¹ See Ch. Six, Section V below.

¹⁵² The Leeds Mercury, July 4, 1829, p.3. The Leeds Intelligencer, July 9, 1829, p.3.

¹⁵³ The Leeds Mercury, Aug. 29, 1829, p.3.

of unemployed Irish weavers applied for passes to return to Ireland.

Twelve passes were granted that day but the Overseers of the poor having found the operation extremely expensive, decided to suspend it indefinitely.¹⁵⁴

The beleaguered Overseers sent streams of panicky letters to other parishes urging them to remit payment for the relief of their poor who resided in Barnsley.¹⁵⁵

In late September a deputation of weavers presented a memorial to the Duke of Wellington who at the time was attending horse races at Doncaster. The deputation asked him to take the necessary steps to end the slump in the linen trade.¹⁵⁶

The distress grew so serious that by November the weavers were forced to give up their fight for the June price list. But although they were willing to work, little employment was available. Ten of the town's twenty-five manufacturers wound up their businesses that year.¹⁵⁷ In December the industry was described as "still in a depressed state," with only 314 looms fully employed, 1,202 partially at work, and 2,194 completely idle.¹⁵⁸

Recovery began in 1830 but it took a long time.¹⁵⁹ It was not until

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., Sept.5, 1829, p.3.

¹⁵⁵ "Overseers Letter Books", Vol.I, (MS. B.R.L.).

¹⁵⁶ The Leeds Mercury, Sept. 19, 1829, p.3. In their memorial the weavers strongly indicated that Free Trade was the main cause of their distress.

¹⁵⁷ Wilkinson, "Barnsley Local History," op.cit., p.120.

¹⁵⁸ The Leeds Intelligencer, Dec.31, 1829, p.3. Any discrepancy in the numbers of total looms in August and December may have been due to the movement of weavers out of town during the depression. It may also have been due to inaccuracies in the statistical reports. But it does not affect our major point.

¹⁵⁹ The Leeds Mercury, Feb.13, 1830, p.3; Aug.4, 1832, p.5. Hoyle, op.cit., p.276. The Sheffield Iris, Mar.23, 1831, p.4; April 24, 1832, p.3.

1834 that there were reports of all hands being fully employed.¹⁶⁰

During 1835-36 the linen trade was at its best. The orders from home and abroad were more than the manufacturers could cope with; the weavers' wages shot up and, for the first time in the history of the trade, there was a serious shortage of labour, especially in the inferior branches. New hands could not find accommodation as all the cottages were occupied.

Some manufacturers of cheap linens capitalized on the shortage of housing by forcing their tenants to weave for them or otherwise face eviction from their cottages.¹⁶¹

On the national level British linen exports had climbed from 48,635,007 yards in 1830 to 65,570,653 yards in 1835 and 68,988,542 yards in 1836.¹⁶²

In the winter of 1836, however, the situation began to deteriorate. Work was short and in December one manufacturer was reported to have discontinued 200 of his weavers.¹⁶³

By the following year distress had become so general that in September the town's philanthropists created a fund for the unemployed.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ The Leeds Mercury, June 14, 1834, p.5.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., Mar.7, 1835, p.5; June 6, 1835, p.5; Aug.22, 1835, p.5; Jan.9, 1836, p.5; Mar.26, 1836, p.5; Aug.6, 1836, p.5. Hoyle, op.cit., p.293. For full employment in the national economy see Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, op.cit., pp.249-250. For the manufacturers who forced their tenants to weave for them, see The Leeds Times, Oct.3, 1835, p.3.

¹⁶² P.R.O. Cust.9/17, 22 & 23. The linen value series rose faster (from £1,431,499 in 1830 to £2,893,399 in 1836) than the quantity series, which indicates a general price rise for British linen exports, Idem. See also Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, op.cit., Vol.II, p.775.

¹⁶³ The Leeds Mercury, Dec.10, 1836, p.5; Hoyle, loc.cit.

¹⁶⁴ The Leeds Times, Sept.30, 1837, p.5; Hoyle, op.cit., CLI.

A month earlier a correspondent to a Leeds newspaper had reported on Barnsley in depressing terms:

The depressed state of our linen trade has had a wonderful effect upon this annual feast, which the working class look to and enjoy, more so than any other holiday during the year. No money, no making of friends, no fiddling or dancing for Sally, no club flags, flying from the tavern windows, no drunkards to be seen in the streets. No beef wasting at the bakehouse, no manly sports as in former years. Poverty without invitation appears to have been the principal visitor at the cottages of too many of the poor. 165

At about the same time the manufacturers issued a new price list averaging 10 to 15 per cent lower than that agreed on in the previous year. 166

But by the Autumn of 1838 the situation had improved so much that all the weavers were employed. A few secured a rise in their piece rates. 167

It was only a short-term revival. By mid-1839 there were obvious signs of distress and, as 'Ned Nut' observed, that year's annual Barnsley feast was different. Formerly, "roast beef and plum-pudding made many a cottage-groan; while sparkling ale gladdened many a weaver's heart,

But now the pantry-shelves are bare
There's neither beef nor pudding there
Nor barrell filled with sparkling ale,
To aid the song or cheer the tale." 168

Sparked off by the general industrial depression which began in 1839, 169

165 The Leeds Intelligencer, Aug.26, 1837, p.5.

166 The Leeds Times, Sept. 2, 1837, p.5.

167 Hoyle, op.cit., CLVI.

168 Ned Nut (Pseud.), The Barnsley and Village Record, or the Book of Facts and Fancies for the Year 1839, pp.34-35.

169 See Gayer, Rostow, & Schwartz, op.cit., p.244. The Leeds Mercury, May 25, Nov.2 & Dec. 7, 1839.

distress in the Barnsley linen trade, especially in hand-loom weaving, remained more or less a perennial evil which plunged hundreds of hand-loom weavers into endless misery.

It is pertinent at this stage to review the state of the linen trade in the foreign markets for which figures are available. From 1840 many British merchants began to contract their engagements with the United States owing to fears of possible hostilities.¹⁷⁰ Whereas in 1839 Britain had exported to the United States 20,645,436 yards of linen worth £1,044,177, in 1842 she exported only 11,722,215 yards worth only £588,905.¹⁷¹ Linen and other exports to China and the East India Company territories were held up by the Opium War. In 1840 China received from Britain only 55,745 yards as compared to 136,671 in the previous year.¹⁷² In 1841 British linen and yarn exports to France were hit by a heavy tariff, averaging 10 to 13 per cent.¹⁷³ To an industry which so heavily relied on foreign trade, these developments constituted a recipe for disaster.

In 1840 unemployment spread, some firms closed down and misery stared many weavers in the face. The readers of the Northern Star were told, "The masters are turning away their men without ceremony and God knows where these fellows will get anything to support nature."¹⁷⁴ By February the number of paupers had increased so much that there was no room for

¹⁷⁰ Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, op.cit., p.283.

¹⁷¹ P.R.O., Cust. 9/26 & 29.

¹⁷² Ibid. Cust. 9/26 & 27.

¹⁷³ See Rimmer, op.cit., pp.199, 210f. The Leeds Mercury, June 4, 1842, p.4. The Mercury, which complained of "the jealousy and hostility of the French towards the English," estimated that the new French duty amounted to 30-40% on heavy linen goods. Idem.

¹⁷⁴ The Northern Star, Jan.18, 1840, p.4. For similar hardship in Knaresborough, see Jennings, op.cit., p.280.

more in the workhouse. Many weavers were reduced to "open beggary in the streets."¹⁷⁵ A relief committee formed at a public meeting on March 2 raised £260 which it disbursed among 500 families, but owing to lack of sufficient funds, the committee wound up its operations in June.¹⁷⁶ Some manufacturers threw the general price list overboard; the level of wages declined by as much as 20 per cent.¹⁷⁷ In this state of general misery many weavers left the town in search of work. Some went up north; others went as far away as Belgium and the Americas.¹⁷⁸ The situation remained desperate till early 1844. In 1841 there was talk of "famine" and "starvation in the streets".¹⁷⁹ In 1842 "hundreds" of men were said to be employed on the roads "for a pound of bread and a quarter of bad potatoes" each day.¹⁸⁰

In the Summer of 1842 fancy fabrics experienced some improvement. In July a Leeds paper reported that fancy drill weavers had "come off relief."¹⁸¹ The same paper reported in December that among the fancy

¹⁷⁵ The Northern Star, Feb.15, 1840, p.4; Feb.29, 1840, p.5. Burland, "Annals of Barnsley" Vol.II, op.cit., pp.129, 131.

¹⁷⁶ The Northern Star, Mar.7, 1840, p.5; April 4, 1840, p.5; June 6, 1840, p.5.

¹⁷⁷ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.148. For the wage disputes see Ch. Six, Section VII below.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.131. The Northern Star, Feb. 6, 1841, p.5.

¹⁷⁹ Burland, op.cit., pp.180, 183. The Leeds Mercury, July 24, 1841, p.5.

¹⁸⁰ The Northern Star, Mar. 5, 1842, p.5.

¹⁸¹ The Leeds Mercury, July 23, 1842, p.5.

linen weavers work was "given out very freely." The conclusion of peace with China, which was one of the principal consumers of Barnsley's fancy drills, had given that branch of linen manufacture an impetus. But among the weavers of plain goods, unemployment was still very widespread.¹⁸² In the following year half the weaving population was said to be unemployed.¹⁸³ Even as late as February 1844, when there was already an upswing in the general trend of the economy, it was reported from Barnsley: "This town has every appearance of being in as wretched a state during the ensuing summer as it was last. Large numbers of weavers are daily becoming unemployed."¹⁸⁴ The Government Sub-Inspector of Factories in charge of the Yorkshire district correctly reported in 1845 that in Yorkshire the flax industry, in both spinning and weaving, had been the last to feel the renewed activity in trade after the depression.¹⁸⁵

The Spring of 1844 saw the beginning of revival in the Barnsley linen trade. At the end of March it was reported to be "moderately brisk."¹⁸⁶ In the Summer it was described as "exceedingly brisk."¹⁸⁷ And in 1845, during the peak of the economic boom, linen weaving became "uncommonly brisk." Two hundred additional hands, who had struck work in Knaresborough, easily found employment in Barnsley. Every branch of the trade, fancy or plain, heavy or light, power or hand, was doing well.¹⁸⁸ To the weavers,

¹⁸² Ibid., Dec. 3, & Dec. 31, 1842, pp.5.

¹⁸³ The Northern Star, June 10, 1843, p.5.

¹⁸⁴ The Sheffield Iris, Feb. 22, 1844, p.4.

¹⁸⁵ P.P. 1845 (639), XXV: Report of the Inspector of Factories, p.47.

¹⁸⁶ The Wakefield Journal & West Riding Herald, Mar. 29, 1844, p.3.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., May 17, 1844, p.3.

¹⁸⁸ The Sheffield Iris, July 10 & Sept. 18, 1845, pp.8.

however, the improvement did not come with higher rates of pay. It just meant that those who had, for months or even years, remained unemployed, now became fully employed. But from late 1847 to mid-1849 there was considerable unemployment.¹⁸⁹ The following 18 months or so saw some improvement but with the exception of the unusually good period in 1853, constant underemployment and frequent unemployment remained a permanent characteristic of the Barnsley linen trade until its demise late in the century.

The Crimean war brought with it a crippling 'flax famine'. By 1850 Russian flax had assumed considerable importance for the British spinning and weaving of linen. Irish flax, which in the past had fed the spinning factories of Leeds, was in great demand in Ireland itself where power spinning had made great progress. When Russia stopped her supplies of flax to the United Kingdom, the material became extremely scarce. Yarn prices in Leeds and elsewhere shot up.¹⁹⁰ The consequences for Barnsley were catastrophic.

From the early months of 1854 large-scale unemployment prevailed and many manufacturers reduced the wage rates. A "great many" young weavers took refuge in the collieries and iron works where work was available.¹⁹¹ Some weavers emigrated. On Monday, May 8th "a large number" of the inhabitants gathered at the railway station to witness the departure of "no fewer than 27 persons" who were emigrating to America. Letters had

¹⁸⁹ The Leeds Times, Dec.4, 1847, p.5; The Leeds Mercury, June 16, 1849, p.10.

¹⁹⁰ See Rimmer, op.cit., p.228.

¹⁹¹ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.468, 493, 516, 520 & 526; The Sheffield Free Press, July 29, 1854, p.3.

arrived from ex-Barnsley weavers now in America saying that employment and earning prospects were a great deal better in the New World.¹⁹²

A Barnsley weaver wrote in a newspaper in July stating that the unemployment caused by the high yarn prices had created a situation which was "better imagined than described." No less than thirty persons had absconded, leaving their families to be cared for by the Poor Law Union. They had preferred absconding to seeing their children starve:

If any individual doubts the veracity of these remarks, let him go into Wilson's Piece, Union Row, Copper Street, Worsborough Common, or any other district inhabited by the hand-loom weavers, and he will find abundant proof of their truth. He will find whole families reduced to the lowest state of destitution, who are, after having exhausted every means of subsistence, obliged to give up their houses and go to the Union House. ¹⁹³

The downward trend continued into the following year when less than a quarter of the hand-loomers were said to be employed. In February a public meeting formed a Relief Committee and divided the town into six subscription districts. In ten weeks the Committee collected £726 and 50 tons of coal, and administered relief to more than 890 families.¹⁹⁴ By mid-summer there was some improvement. In July it was reported that damask weavers, who had scarcely had any work for six months, were now fully employed.

¹⁹² The Sheffield Free Press, May 13, 1854, p.5. See also Idem: Dec.31, 1853, p.8, for one of the letters from America. An ex-Barnsley weaver, writing from America, said that the manager of his factory had work for 200 to 300 more weavers from Barnsley.

¹⁹³ The Sheffield Free Press, May 13, 1854, p.5.

¹⁹⁴ Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, pp.7, 21-22.

Drill weavers together with all the power-loom weavers of common fabrics were fully employed as well.¹⁹⁵ But the bulk of the hand-loom weavers of common fabrics remained outside the pale of the short-lived revival and what with the unemployment, the "high price of provisions" and the "inclemency of the winter weather", the Relief Committee was forced to revive the soup kitchen in December.¹⁹⁶ Those weavers who could still get work were involved in a protracted but losing battle to prevent their piece-rates from falling.

At the beginning of May 1856 half the weaving population was still unemployed.¹⁹⁷ Not surprisingly, therefore, when peace was signed later in the month, there was much rejoicing in the town. On May 29 the streets and houses were colourfully decorated to welcome the peace which, it was hoped, would bring the much longed for prosperity in the trade. Public demonstrations, sumptuous dinners provided by the manufacturers, and other activities marked the occasion.¹⁹⁸ But in the coming period there was no prosperity in sight, especially for the hand-loom weavers. In 1857 the newspapers reported that the effect of peace had "not yet" been felt in the Barnsley linen trade. Yarn price was still "too high." Unemployment and wage cuts were widespread.¹⁹⁹ Since the coal industry was booming at this time, the drift to the mines among the younger weavers went apace. In fact, from the 1850's, the English linen trade generally declined markedly.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp.65, 76, 81.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p.119. For the rising prices see, Geoffrey Best, Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875, (1971), p.4f

¹⁹⁷ The Sheffield Free Press, May 10, 1856, p.8.

¹⁹⁸ The Barnsley Times, May 31, 1856, p.2.

¹⁹⁹ The Sheffield Free Press, June 7, 1856, p.8; Jan.24, Mar.14 & Ap.4, 1857.

²⁰⁰ See Deane & Cole, op.cit., p.205.

The 'cotton famine' of the 1860's revived the trade but most of the benefits went to the Irish and Scottish manufacturers who paid much lower wages than their Yorkshire counterparts. The surviving Barnsley linen trade was virtually killed by the power-loom weavers' strike and lock-out of 1872-73 which lasted thirty weeks.²⁰¹

The case of the Barnsley linen industry seems to have been one of extreme vulnerability to trade depressions and such adverse international developments as wars and tariffs. These pressures were in turn re-enforced by the large extent to which cotton piece goods were substituted for linen material. On the weavers' side this meant recurrent unemployment and progressively declining rates of pay. To the manufacturers it meant often overstocked warehouses, chronic financial crises and, indeed, a low rate of survival in business. Table 2.5 gives the survival rates of individual manufacturers and their heirs between 1816 and 1862. They appear to be very low. Very few of the manufacturers, it would appear, left the linen industry for such greener pastures as the coal industry. The case of ten out of twenty-five manufacturers becoming bankrupt in 1829 bears eloquent testimony to this point. The industry was destined to die.

By the 1880's the industry was supporting less than 1,000 people; many weavers' shops had been converted to other uses; and most of the old timber looms had been "broken up into fire-wood".²⁰² It was a long decline; but what of the workers in the industry?

²⁰¹ There are excellent press cuttings on the strike and lockout in Wilkinson, "Barnsley Local History" op.cit., pp.108-125.

²⁰² Yorkshire, 50 Years of Progress, (Leeds, 1887), reprint from the Yorkshire Post; p.41.

Table 2.5: Linen Manufacturers' Survival Rates, 1816-1862.

Base Year	No. of Manufacturers in Base Year.	Terminal Year	No. of Survivors in Terminal Year	Survival Rate
1816	34	1822	22	65%
-do-	-do-	1837	12	35%
-do-	-do-	1852	7	21%
-do-	-do-	1862	7	21%
1822	36	1837	17	47%
-do-	-do-	1852	8	22%
-do-	-do-	1862	7	19%
1837	43	1852	15	35%
-do-	-do-	1862	12	28%
1852	38	1862	24	63%

Compiled from the local Directories, 1816-1862, already cited.

V. The Condition of the Hand-loom Weavers:

Much that concerns the condition of the linen weavers will have been read or inferred in the foregoing discussion on the linen trade. Nevertheless, there is need for a fuller description and analysis of the situation in three main areas: the weavers' working conditions, their earnings, and the quality of their lives - objectively and subjectively.

Linen handloom weaving was carried on in specially constructed cottages in which the weaving 'shop' was in the cellar, the floor of the shop being about four feet below the level of the street. The explanation for the 'underground' shop is that a bit of dampness was necessary for linen

weaving.²⁰³ A large-scale erection of such cottages began at the beginning of the century and was very much accelerated during the 1810's and 1820's.

Most of the shops were about six feet high, fifteen feet long and twelve feet broad. The shop window was kept shut but had a small aperture for letting in air.²⁰⁴

Since the town had no proper sewerage system until the 1860's, much of the liquid sewage saturated the ground as well as the walls of the weaving shops thus causing an excess of dampness. In wet weather it was not uncommon for the cellar shops to get flooded.²⁰⁵

John Burland, who was once himself a weaver, said that in the construction of the weavers' cottages the practice was to erect many of them on a very small area and "to immure the weaver in a sort of living grave, greatly to the prejudice of his health and comfort".²⁰⁶

In their basement shops the weavers worked under very unhealthy conditions. Not only did they have to inhale damp and 'offensive' air

²⁰³ This is in complete contrast to the 'top shop' in ribbon weaving. Possibly since ribbon weaving was more delicate work, it required more light and, possibly, the material was likely to be damaged by dampness. See Searby, op.cit., passim; Sir Frank Warner, The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom (1921), p.56.

²⁰⁴ William Ranger, Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, and Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of Barnsley (H.M.S.O., 1852), Ranger Report, pp.15-19.

²⁰⁵ See Chapter Five on Sanitation for details.

²⁰⁶ John Hugh Burland, "Miscellaneous Writings" (MS., B.R.L.), p.235.

but they were also starved of natural light and proper ventilation. Not surprisingly, therefore, one local surgeon testified in 1841 that most weavers were "liable to consumptive complaints,"²⁰⁷ and ten years later a manufacturer complained that the work brought in by the hand-loom weavers had "the most offensive and unhealthy odour" which was "peculiar and indescribable."²⁰⁸

Though weaving required manual dexterity, it involved some muscular exertion and was, to some extent, monotonous. Under the piece-work system where the wage rates were, by all standards, very low,²⁰⁹ the weavers were obliged to spend an average of fourteen to fifteen hours a day on their work.²¹⁰ Juvenile apprentices of between eleven and fifteen were forcibly woken up at six in the mornings and remained in the shops till ten or eleven at night with only two half-hour dinner and tea breaks. It was a coercive system. The master-weavers, under pressure to produce as much as possible in order to make ends meet, not only wove for long hours themselves but worked their apprentices (and even their own children) to exhaustion.²¹¹ The parish apprentices bore the worst brunt of this coercion. Those who failed to complete stipulated lengths of warps were cruelly beaten up. In 1816 a number of them were found with "great marks of violence."²¹² The master-weavers not only coerced their domiciliary

²⁰⁷ Children's Employment Commission (mines, 1842), op.cit., p.267.

²⁰⁸ Ranger Report, op.cit., p.21.

²⁰⁹ See below, pp.142f and also a comparison of weavers and colliers in Ch. Three, Section V.

²¹⁰ The Leeds Mercury, Nov. 21, 1818, p.3.

²¹¹ Children's Employment Commission (mines, 1842), op.cit., pp.264-265.

²¹² Ibid.; "Overseers' Letter Books", Vol.I, (MS., B.R.L.), letter dated July 23, 1816, p.15.

apprentices but exploited them as well: "I get about 5s. a week which the man I weave for takes and he clothes and feeds me."²¹³ Unfortunately, the sources available do not reveal to what extent the domiciliary apprenticeship system prevailed. It would appear that after 1840, or thereabouts, it quickly declined.

The piece-rates depended on the kind of goods the different weavers produced. As a general rule fine linen paid better than coarse linen, and among the weavers of either, fancy weavers were better off than plain linen weavers.²¹⁴ Over the whole period there was a steep downward trend of the piece rates as Table 2.6 will illustrate. The figures only go as far as 1838 but we know from other evidence that the piece-rates declined even much more steeply after 1840, what with the coming of the power-loom and the persistent crises culminating in the collapse of the town's industry.²¹⁵

The 'declining weaver' is almost proverbial in British social history.²¹⁶ But the explanations for the phenomenon have not been satisfactory because no attempt has been made to differentiate between the principal and subsidiary factors. It is now recognized that the weavers' wages began to decline before the power-loom came into general use.²¹⁷ As Table 2.6 clearly illustrates, this was as true for linen as it was for cotton. Among some of the reasons given for the decline of wages in hand weaving are: 1) the lack of trade union protection, 2) the action of the greedy

²¹³ Children's Employment Commission (mines, 1842), op.cit., p.264.

²¹⁴ For a comprehensive specimen price list, see Appendix A.

²¹⁵ See Chapter Six, Section VII below.

²¹⁶ See E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, op.cit., pp.305ff; E.P.Thompson & Eileen Yeo (eds.), The Unknown Mahyew, (Penguin ed.,1973).., pp.122-136; Bythell, The Handloom Weavers, op.cit., p.60 et passim.

²¹⁷ Thompson, op.cit., p.309; Bythell, op.cit., p.74ff.

Table 2.6: Selected Piece-rates, 1811-1838 :

Description of Work	Price 1811-1814	1818	1825	1829	1838
	with fent £. s. d.	with fent £. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.
34 Beers 7/8 linen	1 2 0	0 17 7	0 18 2	0 14 3	0 13 0
56 Beers 4/5 linen	2 2 11	1 14 8	1 12 0	1 6 0	1 4 0
102 Beers 10/4 linen	_____	4 7 6	2 18 0	2 8 0	2 0 0
37 Beers 4/4 duck	_____	1 2 0	1 2 0	0 17 7	0 16 0
36 Beers huckabacks & diapers	2 14 10	1 8 7	1 5 4	0 18 0	0 16 0
86 Beers plain drill	2 10 0	2 6 0	2 1 0	1 11 8	1 4 0
14 Beers Towelling	_____	0 11 0	0 9 4	_____	0 6 0
24 Beers Duck	_____	0 12 0	0 11 6	0 8 6	0 8 6

Source: Assistant Commissioners' Report on the Handloom Weavers, (1840) - already cited, p.482.

manufacturers capitalizing on the overstocked labour market to reduce the wages, and 3) the contemporary bourgeois theory that poverty was "an essential goad to industry."²¹⁸ These factors of human agency, however, must be relegated to a secondary position. It would not be accurate to assert that the Barnsley weavers lacked trade union protection.²¹⁹ The role of manufacturers in deliberately reducing wages cannot, of course be disregarded. These were men with a high calculating rationality, in business to make money and therefore likely to take advantage of such

²¹⁸ See Thompson, op.cit., pp.305-307.

²¹⁹ See last Section of Chapter Six below.

situations as an excessive supply of labour. But one must appreciate the fact that the weight of impersonal forces probably had the greatest impact on the plight of the hand-loom weavers. The linen trade was subject to recurrent crises which eventuated in its collapse. Almost all the wage deductions took place during these trade crises. Nevertheless, people continued to pour in, in search of jobs. A rumour that there was work in Barnsley used to bring in desperate new-comers, most of them willing to work at any price. In a crisis-ridden, declining, but overmanned industry the weavers underbid one another, thus bringing their wages to starvation levels.

The weaver's disposable earnings, say in a month, were determined by so many other factors apart from the piece-rate.²²⁰ The first was the time factor: how long it took him to finish a piece. A faulty loom or bad-quality yarn would tend to delay him - his own skill and efficiency notwithstanding. A general complaint among the weavers was that there was a time-lag between completing one piece and moving on to the next. Sometimes manufacturers had to wait long for the yarn to arrive, especially if they happened to have liquidity or credit difficulties. In their submission to the Handloom Weavers' Commission the weavers estimated that one week in every eight was spent merely on changing from one piece to another. In times of industrial crises there was more irregularity and a much longer waiting period. There is an example in Table 2.7 of John Wild's

²²⁰ Some of the salient factors are highlighted in Bythell, "The Handloom Weavers, etc.,: Some Problems" in Economic History Review, op.cit., pp.347-348.

Table 2.7 : Illustration of a Weaver's Waiting Period :

Yarn Out	Piece In	Waited Till
9 June	16 June	20 June
20 June	27 June	6 July
6 July	12 July	18 July
19 July	25 July	1 August
1 August	8 August	18 August

Source: Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840),
(already cited), p.497.

waiting period between June and August 1838 - a period when the industry was quickly recovering from a fairly serious depression. Wild, a journeyman, wove a 39-beers, 32-inch linen at 8s. a piece. Between June 20 and August 15 he wove five pieces, spending 33 days on the actual weaving and the remaining 32 on waiting for the next pieces.

The weaver also incurred working expenses and other deductions. He had to hire such loom accessories as shuttles, pickers, reeds and healds. He had to buy starch and brushes for yarn dressing, candles for lighting, and coal for warming up the shop. The journeyman weaver had to pay loom rent. Those weavers who did not have the advantage of family help had to pay a winding charge; and those who lived in the outlying areas had to hire carts for transporting the yarn. In 1838 it was calculated that such expenses cost a minimum of 2s. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a week - about a fifth of the town average weekly wage at the time.²²¹ On returning his piece to the

²²¹ Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit., p.479. Similar calculations in 1818 showed that working expenses reduced the weekly wage from 18s. to 13s. a week: The Leeds Mercury, Nov.21,1818,p.3.

warehouse, the weaver sometimes submitted to deduction of up to 3s. a piece because of shoddy work (usually done by apprentices), "but sometimes," complained a weaver, "for no other reason ... but the temper and caprice of the Master."²²² The 1838 Handloom Weavers Commission found out that some manufacturers used to pay their weavers in kind. A manufacturer named Tyne refused to pay his weaver for the first piece until he had brought in the second because he had found fault with the first. When the man brought in the second piece, he received 13 yards of 4-4 duck (valued at 1s. 2½d. a yard) in lieu of cash. When the poor weaver tried to hawk the piece around the shops, he found out that he could have bought the same kind of material cheaper, at only 1s. a yard.²²³ A stanza from John Burland's 'Song of the Shuttle' depicted the situation very well:

Pick the shuttle! Swing the fly!
A-bunting to the warehouse hie ---
There to meet with grumbling, bating,
Another warp for a month's waiting
Clickit, clackit, sweat and die! 224

Factors tending to increase the weavers' disposable incomes were very rare. Weavers who worked with members of their families naturally did better than those on whom alone fell the burden of supporting their families. If the census statistics are anything to go by, more than half the heads of weavers' households had to bear such burden.²²⁵ The weavers' fents were withdrawn as early as 1823.²²⁶ There were cases of weavers who embezzled yarn which, it was alleged, they sold to yarn agents either

²²² The Leeds Mercury, Nov.21, 1818, p.3.

²²³ Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit., p.483.

²²⁴ J.H. Burland, 'The Song of the Shuttle' in Mr. Burland's Poems (B.R.L.), n.p.

²²⁵ See Table 2.2 above.

²²⁶ See Chapter Six, Section III below.

locally or in places as far away as Wigan.²²⁷ The domestic system rendered the pilfering of yarn quite possible. The embezzlement of weft yarn could be done by 'underwefting' the woven cloth during the 'beating in' stage of weaving. To avoid detection, a weaver would 'steam' his cloth just before returning it to the warehouse so that it would reflect the correct weight. The Manufacturers' Association, founded in the mid-1840's, took steps to deal with the problem. They appointed an 'Inspector of Linens' - known as 'the spy' among the weavers - to detect and prosecute weavers who embezzled yarn. Whenever such a case occurred, the Court House was always crowded by weavers. In September 1848 a Mrs. Jane Parker who was charged by the Inspector of Linens with embezzling yarn, succeeded in having the case dismissed by the court. The audience, consisting almost entirely of weavers, gave a loud applause when the verdict was announced. Later on during the day, the Inspector of Linens was jeered and hooted by a large crowd of weavers.²²⁸ But on some occasions the Inspector succeeded in having weavers convicted for embezzling yarn.²²⁹ How widespread yarn embezzling was in those days was difficult enough for both the Inspector of Linens and the magistrates. It is a great deal more difficult for us today. The weavers themselves were ever ready to deny that they engaged in such acts of fraud.²³⁰ But we would not expect

²²⁷ Wilkinson, "Barnsley Local History," op.cit., p.113.

²²⁸ The Leeds Times, Sept. 2, 1848, p.5. In her defence Mrs. Parker stated that she had bought the yarn herself from a yarn agent (who testified to the fact).

²²⁹ Ibid., Feb. 26, 1848, p.5.

²³⁰ An embezzlement case in 1858 sparked off a condemnatory reaction from the Weavers' Association which did its best to defend a fellow weaver from what it called "false and slanderous charges," Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", Vol.III, op.cit., pp.220-221.

them to have said otherwise. Given the risks involved, we cannot expect the majority of weavers to have flourished on it.²³¹ Whatever augmentation yarn embezzling made to the disposable incomes of weavers can be regarded, in the majority of cases, as having been largely immaterial.

A quantitative assessment of the change in the weavers' standards of living would require the kind of data that we do not have. Our wages series, themselves unevenly scattered, cover only half of our period. We have no figures for the period after 1840 when hand-loom weaving is believed to have markedly declined. Also, we do not have local price series. But even if prices and wages series were available, they would still give a lopsided picture of the weavers' standards of living as they would not take into account the two major characteristic features of the linen trade - under- and unemployment. One would have to compile an 'index of economic activity' among the linen hand-loom weavers over the period. According to the available information, this is a humanly impossible task. Although we are statistically constrained in measuring the weavers' standards of living the overwhelming literary evidence in the press and in the Handloom Weavers and Children Employment Commissions' reports shows that the linen weavers' standards of living declined very rapidly after the 1830's. 'Relief Committees' became more or less a permanent institution of the town within the framework of private charity; their beneficiaries were invariably the linen hand-loom weavers.²³²

²³¹ There is no case of embezzlement reported by the town Superintendent of Police for the year 1855: Police Report, 1856: Cusworth Hall Museum. On the other hand embezzlements might have been excluded because prosecution was carried on privately on the behalf of the Manufacturers' Association.

²³² See Chapter Four, Section IV below. For problems in the measurement of the standard of living, see R.S. Neale, "The Standard of Living, 1780-1844: a Regional & Class Study," Economic History Review, 2nd Ser., XIX (1966), pp.590-606; George J. Barnsby, "The Standard of Living in the Black Country," Idem., XXIV (1971), pp.220-239; Colin P. Griffin, "The Standard of Living in the Black Country: A Comment" & Barnsby's Rejoinder, Idem., XXVI (1973), pp.510-516; T.R. Gourvish, "The Cost of Living in Glasgow in the 19th Century," Idem., XXV, (1972), pp.65-80.

The linen weaving community was never a stable labour force; people came and went. In 1836 during a strike in Drogheda, Ireland, all the sheeting weavers came into Barnsley hoping to get better wages. Some who were disappointed went to try their luck elsewhere.²³³ The crises of the 1840's and 1850's sent weavers to different places including America and Belgium. Some returned on hearing that the trade had improved. Owing to the disintegration of apprenticeship regulations, and because the art of weaving could be learned in a maximum period of three weeks, agricultural labourers and other groups inundated the town whenever there were prospects of employment. It was for this reason that the town's middle-class looked at the weavers as a nomadic race. One clergyman alleged that the "migratory portion" of the weavers was in the majority and that they

Table 2.8: Distribution of Persons in Weavers' Households, 1841:

Persons per Household	Frequency of Households				
	District 4	District 5	District 6	District 7	All Four Districts
1	2	-	1	-	3
2	5	6	16	5	32
3	11	10	23	15	59
4	19	13	35	17	84
5	20	15	24	19	78
6	16	10	16	11	53
7	14	7	21	26	68
8	11	8	11	12	42
9	9	3	10	18	40
10	8	2	4	7	21
11	2	1	1	-	4
12	1	-	-	-	1
13	-	-	1	-	1

Compiled from P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

²³³ Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840), op.cit., p.630.

were of reckless habits."²³⁴

It was quite normal for householders to put up their relatives or friends who came to look for work. Indeed a situation whereby two or more families lived in one cottage was very common. One clearly sees this in the census books. Partly because of such situations and partly because the families were normally large, the weavers' households tended to consist of many people, - sometimes as many as ten - huddled in one small cottage. Table 2.8 shows a frequency distribution in 1841 of individuals among the 486 weavers' households (i.e. those headed by weavers) in four enumeration districts in the southern section of the town. The area contained about 3,000 people and roughly corresponds with area 'A' in map number 6. The mean distribution is 5.6 persons per household, and although the mode is 4 persons per household, in two of the districts it is 5 persons and in one, 7 persons. A third of the households contained seven or more persons each.

The weavers' plight was reflected in the near absence of upward social mobility. Throughout the whole period of this study there does not seem to have been a single weaver who became a manufacturer. In their situation, and with such a low level of their wages, it was nigh to impossible for them to save enough money, establish desirable creditworthiness for the necessary working capital, or make the suitable marketing contacts. The coming of the power loom rendered such upward social mobility even more remote. Most of the manufacturers, though originating from humbler

²³⁴ Children's Employment Commission, (mines, 1842), op.cit.,
Rev. Robert Willan, incumbent of St. Mary's, p.263.

beginnings, had been brought up in the business world. Only a few of them like Thomas Taylor, Henry Richardson and Joseph Beckett came from small land-owner families. But the majority seem to have made their beginnings as apprentices either in retail trade or manufacturing. Joseph Canter, Charles Tee, and Robert Craik had been apprenticed to woollen and linen drapers. John Semple and Thomas Tee had acted as travelling agents for the firms which they eventually joined as partners. Thomas Fletcher, son of a watch and clock maker, had been apprenticed to a linen manufacturer before going into business himself. Mawer, of the firm Mawer and Wilson, started off as a foreman in Wilson's warehouse. When he later married Wilson's daughter, he was co-opted into the linen firm as a partner.²³⁵ The impoverished weavers did not fit into this kind of pattern. A few of them like John Vallance, Peter Hoey or Joseph Crabtree had a go at shop- or public house-keeping but never really made any headway.

Probably the worst tragedy about linen hand-loom weaving was that in spite of its poor prospects, people kept coming in. Even after 1850 when the industry was declining very rapidly, there was little occupational mobility among the older weavers. Those who felt too old to learn new skills had to resign themselves to descending "to the lowest depth of

²³⁵ The information on the different manufacturers comes from various sources but most of it from Joseph Wilkinson, Barnsley Obituary, (MS. and cuttings, B.R.L.). Textile and coal-mining communities are notorious for their lack of upward social mobility. But such mobility was conspicuous in small workshop trades. In Sheffield, for example, "the transition from workman to master was a common occurrence." Sidney Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield, (Liverpool, 1959), p.4.

social perdition." They were a dying race, and they knew it, but not all could easily move out. In 1891 there were still fifty of them in Barnsley and the Worsborough Common, averaging seventy-one years in age. The little employment available was for their own benefit rather than that of their masters. Even in the face of hardship, they refused to go into the workhouse so that the town was obliged to institute a "Weavers' Relief Fund." A local paper remarked: "The weavers themselves are every year, like our Waterloo veterans, having their ranks thinned, and will continue to do so until they are extinct."²³⁶ And they were.

In spite of their decline, the weavers did not conceive of themselves as useless or even inferior members of society. They considered themselves as virtuous, hard-working people who contributed much to the nation's wealth but only in return for a raw deal. Like bees they toiled for the enjoyment of the drones; and like chattel slaves the value of their work was not appreciated. The Weavers' Committee, addressing the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission of 1838-40 forcibly made their point:

For this pittance of 5s. 6d. a week, (we) produce shirting cloths, sheeting, bed-ticks, checks, ducks, table linen, furniture covers, fine drills and many other articles of intrinsic value and great worth administering comfort to the people of this and distant lands; and it is a lamentable fact (our) own countrymen can and do take these valuable productions of (our) own labour without any apparent compunction of mind for the inadequate emoluments of 5s. 6d. a week. ²³⁷

²³⁶ The Barnsley Chronicle, Nov. 28, 1891.

²³⁷ Report on the Handloom Weavers, (1840), op.cit., p.480.

It was in this kind of tradition that Barnsley's own John Burland,
himself brought up as a weaver, wrote "The Song of the Shuttle" in 1850:²³⁸

Pick the Shuttle! swing the fly!
Wherefore do the weavers sigh
They must weave the nation's clothing,
But to bear contempt and loathing
Clickit, clackit, sweat and die!

.....

Pick the shuttle! swing the fly!
In his carriage dashing by
The manufacturer rides an-airing
Heedles of your harsh ill-faring
Clickit, clackit, sweat and die!

.....

Pick the shuttle! swing the fly!
Nobs and gents your rights deny;
Ever toiling, ever sparing,
Glad to smell at a cheese-paring
Clickit, clackit, sweat and die!

.....

²³⁸ Burland, "The Song of the Shuttle," loc.cit.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MINING INDUSTRY AND THE MINERS

I have read that the miners earn meat and the weavers do not. Three-fourths of mankind in all climates, even in Norway, Finland and Scotland, live on vegetables. Oatmeal has always been the traditional food of the Scotch and Irish weavers, but if the weavers who are not vegetarians from choice want meat, let them earn it in the mines - they are very welcome to it.

(Thomas Tee, Barnsley linen manufacturer).

He stands aghast in midnight gloom
And hears that message from the tomb,
No mortal hand can save.
His lungs inhale the poisoned gas,
He gasps - he reels - he falls, alas!
Into a miner's grave.

(From "The Miner's Grave" by G. Hanby, miner,
on the Oaks Colliery explosion, 1866).

I. The Development of Mining:

While linen manufacturing was on the retreat as the town's staple trade, another industry in the shape of coal mining was rapidly developing to take its place, thanks both to the geology of Barnsley and to the initiative of the railway builders. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the Barnsley hand-loom weavers dominated the town as the largest occupational group. By 1860 the difference between their number and that of the miners was negligible, and by the late 1860's there were more miners than there were hand-loom weavers.¹

¹ For statistical evidence, see Table 3.4 below.

Barnsley is right in the midst of the 'Middle Coal Measures' of South Yorkshire which are themselves part of the vast North Midland coalfield extending over a distance of about sixty miles from Nottingham in the south to Leeds in the north, and covering an area of over two thousand square miles of the counties of York, Nottingham, Derby, and a bit of Leicester.² The South Yorkshire Middle Coal Measures occupy the area between the rivers Dearne in the north and Dove in the south and contain outcrops of some of the most famous coal seams like the Barnsley, Silkstone and Parkgate. Between the Silkstone in the west and the Barnsley in the east there are about fifteen other seams many of which cross the township of Barnsley and its immediate neighbourhood roughly from north-west to south-east. Also, iron beds, at points intersecting the North Midland coalfield, stretch roughly from Leeds to Derbyshire. The most important ironstone in the vicinity of Barnsley is the Tankersley Iron

Table 3.1: Some coal Seams in the Barnsley area:

Seam	Thickness
Barnsley	9 feet
Silkstone	5 "
Swallow Wood	5 "
Kent's Thick	5 "
Parkgate	5 "
Wathwood	4 "
Kent's Thin	2 "
Abdy	2 "

Source: Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.III p.290; Joseph F. Prince, Silkstone, (Pennistone, 1922), p.113.

² There is abundant literature concerning the North Midland Coalfield. See for example, J.E.Williams, The Derbyshire Miners, (1962), p.23; H.Stanley Jevons, The British Coal Trade (1920), pp.64ff; Thomas Baines, Yorkshire Past & Present, Vol.I, (1870), pp.47ff.

Stone.³

By 1857 the seams extensively worked were the Barnsley, the Silkstone, the Parkgate, the Swallow Wood and the Wathwood; the bulk of the coal produced in the district came from the first two.⁴ The Barnsley bed is the richest and most extensive, stretching northwards from the vicinity of Nottingham to the area beyond Normanton.⁵ Its average thickness of about nine feet is more or less uniform throughout the seam. The Barnsley outcrops very near the town after which it is named, in the west and in the north. Like the rest of the coalfield, it dips eastwards. It contains strata of both 'hard' and 'soft' coal, the former used as industrial (or steam) coal, and the latter as domestic and gas-making coal. The Silkstone, four to six feet thick, was regarded as one of the best domestic coals. Although the Parkgate contains a lot of incombustible material and is, therefore, relatively inferior, it was preferred for domestic use in some parts of Yorkshire because it contained much iron which made the ash too heavy to fly about the room.⁶ By the early nineteenth century the extent and richness of the coalfield around Barnsley was common knowledge so that, to the canal and railway promoters of the period, the prospects for a burgeoning mining industry could not have been brighter.

Coal mining has a long history in Barnsley. In 1413, a time of open-cast mining, long before the outcrop was exhausted, five persons were

³ Robert M. Cox, "The Development of the Coal Industry in South Yorkshire before 1830," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1960), pp.7ff., 67, et.passim; for the Tankersley ironstone, see idem, p.73.

⁴ Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.III, op.cit., p.290.

⁵ Joseph Wilkinson, "Mining in Barnsley" (Vol. of MS and cuttings, B.R.L.), p.20.

⁶ Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.III, op.cit., pp.290-291; Jevons, op.cit., p.65.

prosecuted for allegedly having sought coal on private land. It is claimed that by the mid-seventeenth century coal was in general use in Barnsley and that pits of considerable depths were being sunk.⁷

Samuel Thorp, proprietor of collieries at Pogmoor and Old Town on the western side of Barnsley, erected the first steam engine in the district in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The engine at Pogmoor drew the coal and pumped the water from the 100-yards deep pit.⁸

With the march of the Industrial Revolution, accompanied by a high rate of population increase, the demand for coal as industrial and domestic fuel increased tremendously, and it was mainly in response to this demand that both the Barnsley and the Dearne-and-Dove canals were constructed. A considerable number of the promoters of the two canals were actively involved in the development of the mining industry. Big land-owners like Walter Spencer Stanhope, Thomas Beaumont, Godfrey Wentworth Wentworth and the Duke of Leeds controlled vast areas of mineral land. Others, like Samuel Thorp, Jonas Clarke, Earl Fitzwilliam, William Porter and Richard Micklethwaite, were more deeply involved as coal masters.⁹

⁷ Anon., "Early Mention of Coal in Barnsley and District," (Typescript, B.R.L.) n.p.

⁸ Ibid.; Rev. William Thorp, On the Causes of Explosions in the Barnsley or Thick Coal of Yorkshire (Leeds, 1857), pp.3-9.

⁹ See Chapter One above, p. 5. See also W.N. Slatcher, "The Barnsley Canal: its first twenty years," in Transport History, Vol.I, (1968), pp.48-66; Charles Hadfield, The Canals of Yorkshire and North-West England (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp.169ff.; J.T.Ward, "West Riding Landowners and Mining in the Nineteenth Century," in Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research, Vol.15, No.I, (May 1963), pp.61-74. As well as being coal masters both R. Micklethwaite and Earl Fitzwilliam, especially the latter, were large landowners.

The optimism of the canal promoters was truly justified. The Worsborough branch of the Dearne-and-Dove Canal led to the development of collieries at Worsborough and Stainborough.¹⁰ The Barnsley Canal brought about greater exploitation of the Barnsley and the Silkstone coals. When the Canal Company built a tramroad from the canal end at Barnby Basin to Silkstone Cross in 1809, Jonas Clarke opened a new Colliery at Silkstone. In 1810 the Barnby Basin Colliery which had been closed for some years was re-opened.¹¹ Some Barnsley township collieries like Honeywell, Mount Osborne, Wiltorpe, Old Mill and Porter's Pit had tramroads leading to one or the other of the two canals.¹² Although the canals handled other traffic like limestone, ironstone, linen yarn, timber, corn and so on, coal traffic not only contributed greater total figures but also an increasingly greater proportion of the toll revenue. The point is well illustrated in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 which, respectively, give some statistical information on the goods traffic and the income of the Barnsley Canal Company between 1800 and 1823.

In the 1820's many coal owners in and around Barnsley successfully penetrated the London market which had hitherto been monopolized by the coal masters of the North-east.¹³ By the mid-1830's Barnsley coal was

¹⁰ Joseph Wilkinson, Worsborough: Its Historical Associations and Rural Attractions (London & Barnsley, 1872), p.262.

¹¹ Slatcher, op.cit., pp.62-63.

¹² See Map no.7. Canal transportation led to greater production of coal in many coalfields of the country: See R. Nelson Boyd, Coal Mines Inspection: Its History and Results, (1879),, p.24; J.H.Morris & L.J.Williams, The South Wales Coal Industry, 1841-1875, (1958), p.3; J.E.Williams, The Derbyshire Miners, op.cit., p.20.

¹³ Slatcher, op.cit., p.63. In 1805, R.Clarke of Silkstone had sent a cargo of coal to London as an experiment but the exercise resulted in a loss. (I am indebted to my colleague, Patrick Spaven, for this information).

Table 3.2: Extracts of Goods Traffic on the Barnsley Canal :

Years	Corn qrs.	Coal tons	Iron tons	Lime tons	Limestone tons	Timber tons	Sundries tons
1800-02	4,129	5,093	773	2,848	6,842	462	2,123
1803-05	1,363	25,052	1,334	2,300	12,649	465	2,613
1806-08	1,320	30,365	1,976	3,025	17,413	589	5,518
1809-11	2,529	47,900	1,599	2,280	17,413	489	7,637
1812-14	7,532	76,208	1,329	2,689	23,681	593	10,148
1815-17	12,643	95,104	1,132	1,880	21,087	688	10,610
1818-20	20,874	95,062	1,282	2,102	22,980	302	10,670
1821-23	36,107	109,945	1,029	1,443	19,337	1,267	11,935

Source: C. Hadfield, The Canals of Yorkshire and North-east England (1972), p.176.

Table 3.3: Toll revenue for the Barnsley Canal :

Years	Coal		Other Traffic	
	£	% of total	£	% of total
1800-1802	239	28.9	587	71.1
1803-1805	1,211	59.7	817	40.3
1806-1808	1,344	54.6	1,120	45.4
1809-1811	1,968	57.2	1,471	42.7
1812-1814	3,812	65.6	1,996	34.4
1815-1817	4,992	72.3	1,916	27.7
1818-1820	4,927	71.7	1,946	28.3
1821-1823	5,924	77.5	1,725	22.5

Except for the percentages, the figures are taken from Hadfield, The Canals of Yorkshire etc. (already cited), p.178.

selling well in the London market, though it fetched, on average, about 4s. less per ton than north-east coal.¹⁴ Most of the coal arriving from Barnsley by canal at Hull and (after 1827) Goole was transhipped to London. Apart from the London market there were the more traditional markets in Yorkshire, and the neighbouring counties like Lincolnshire, Cheshire and, especially, industrial Lancashire. These markets also expanded considerably, especially during and after the boom of the mid-1820's. Along the stretch of the North Midland coalfield was a complex of iron works which provided an important market for coal. The major ironworks close to Barnsley were in Worsborough, Thorncliffe, Silkstone and Elsecar. Lime burning also consumed a considerable amount of coal. Clarke of Silkstone and John Twibell of Barnsley burned a proportion of their own coal in their lime kilns.¹⁵

In 1825 Samuel Thorp, who a few years earlier had been forced by financial difficulties to close his pits, re-opened in Barnsley the 'Gawber Hall' collieries of Wilthorpe, Briery Royd, Honey Well and Old Town.¹⁶ Two collieries to the south of the town, Porter's Pit and Locke and Co's Pit, started producing coal in 1827 and 1828 respectively.¹⁷ Soon after 1830 John Hopwood and Henry Jackson opened the Barnsley New Colliery

¹⁴ Mining Journal, Vol.I (1835). While Newcastle coal sold at about 22s. a ton in the London market, coal from the Barnsley district sold at an average 19s. a ton.

¹⁵ In 1856 there were 3 lime kilns in Barnsley township: "Barnsley Poor Rate Assessment, 1855-56" (MS., B.R.L.).

¹⁶ Thorp, op.cit., p.11.

¹⁷ Mr. William Laycock, a retired Barnsley miner who takes a great deal of interest in the history of his trade, first gave me this piece of information. I am grateful for his help. See also: J.Lodge & Sons (publ.) Occurrences and Events of Interest in Barnsley and the District, 1229-1913 (Barnsley, 1914?), p.4.

at Cockram.¹⁸ In 1838 Richard Day and John Twibell opened the Mount Osborne and Old Mill collieries close to the junction of the Barnsley and Dearne-and-Dove canals. In the following year the same partners opened the Pinder Oaks Colliery.¹⁹ Apart from these collieries within or close to the township, there were many others developed in the Barnsley district: in Silkstone, Worsborough, Elsecar and other places. With the development of the 'hot blast' method of iron smelting and other industrial demands, the needed volume of coal was more than the canals could handle: hence the 'railway mania' of the period.

The owners of both the Barnsley and the Dearne-and-Dove Canal Companies were involved in rival railway schemes in the 1820's which were stifled by the trade depressions late in the decade.²⁰ Undoubtedly the main motivation for the railways which were subsequently built through the Barnsley area was the coal trade.²¹ In 1848 when the Bill empowering the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway to build a branch line from Penistone to Barnsley received Royal Assent, the Clarke family of Silkstone celebrated the occasion by entertaining the neighbouring gentry and some 400 miners to a banquet.²² In 1850 and 1851 about eight waggons

¹⁸ Deed dated Jan.15th 1833: Thirty years' lease of 3 acres of land at Cockram by John Clarke to John Hopwood and Henry Jackson at £300 a year per acre: "Records of Thorp of Gawber Hall," Sheffield Central Library, Archives Department, hereafter, 'Sheffield Archives', Wil.D.449.

¹⁹ Occurrences & Events of Interest, etc., loc.cit. For the situation of the collieries, see map no. 7.

²⁰ Hadfield, op.cit., pp.180-181.

²¹ See, for example, John Marshall, The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, (1969), Ch.10. J.T.Ward, "West Riding Landowners and the Railway" in Journal of Transport History, IV, No.4, (Nov.1960), pp.242-251. See Map No.

²² Prince, op.cit., p.112.

of coal from Clarke's collieries were being sent by rail from Pennistone station every day.²³ The relative decline of the canal transportation of coal is reflected by the fact that Clarke's remittances to the Barnsley Canal Company were half as much in the early 1850's as they had been in the early 1840's.²⁴ When the northern section of the Barnsley Branch Railway was opened to mineral traffic in 1850, the coal trade to the port of Goole built up so rapidly that by 1853 the single line was found to be inadequate. A decision was then taken to double up the line at a cost of £28,000; in 1855 the second line was opened to traffic.²⁵

From about 1850 demand for coal increased tremendously. New inland markets, hitherto unpenetrated by the Barnsley coal owners, were opened.²⁶ In 1851 a Leeds paper claimed that the coal trade enjoyed by Clarke and other Silkstone coal masters was the best for ten or twelve years.²⁷ In the following year the Barnsley coal trade was described as "an exciting business".²⁸ It was reported that the coal masters found it impossible to

²³ 'The Records of the Clarke Family of Noblethorpe Hall,' Sheffield Archives, CR 149. Unfortunately, the records do not show the tonnage of the coal. At this time (1850-51) the branch line from Pennistone to Barnsley was not yet complete. Coal was being carted from Silkstone to Pennistone. In 1852 the branch line reached the Silkstone pits from where coal was henceforward taken by train. In 1854 the whole branch line was completed. See Sheffield Free Press, April 17, 1852, p.8 & Jan.14, 1854, p.5.

²⁴ For example, whereas in 1844 and 1845 he paid £1,630 and £1,310 respectively; in 1851 and 1852 he paid only £828 and £529 respectively: Clarke Records, Sheffield Archives, CR84, "General Ledger, 1843-61."

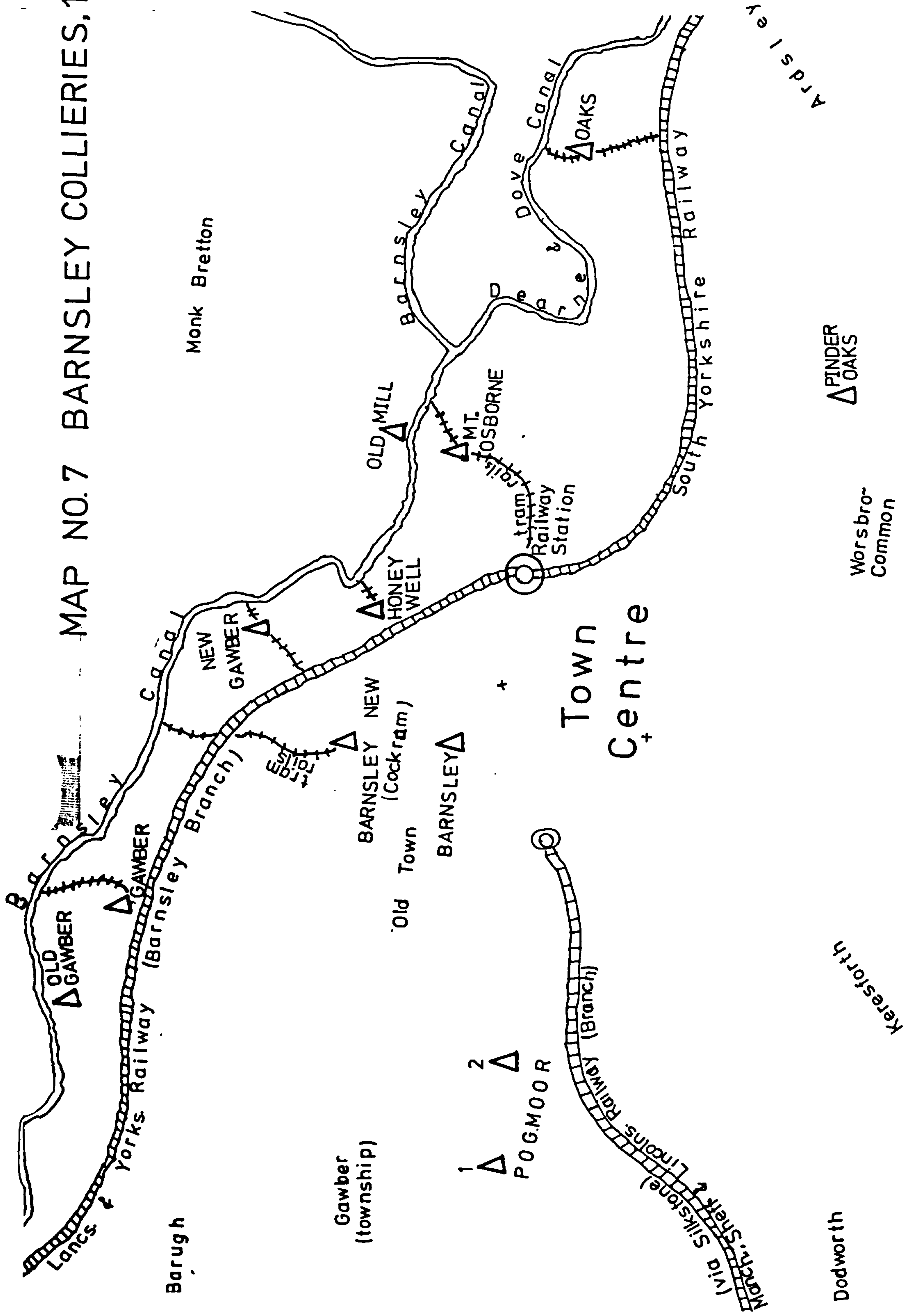
²⁵ Marshall, op.cit., p.217. For the role of the railway elsewhere, see for example, Williams, The Derbyshire Miners, op.cit., pp.41-44 where he argues that the railway transformed Claycross. Also Morris & Williams, op.cit., pp.4-5.

²⁶ Supplement to Leeds Mercury, July 20, 1850, p.9.

²⁷ Ibid., Jan.18, 1851, p.10.

²⁸ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, PP.370, 455 & 473.

MAP NO.7 BARNESLEY COLLIERIES, 1856.



satisfy the demand of the canal and railway companies: "A kind of small coal usually denominated 'smudge', which has been thrown into the goaf for the last twenty years, now finds a ready sale."²⁹ The increased demand led to higher coal prices in 1853 and 1854. In the former year the colliers got a wage increase of between 1 and 2 shillings per dozen corves.³⁰

New collieries were opened and old ones were greatly expanded. From 1851 to 1856 the number of collieries in Yorkshire increased by a third from 260 to 343.³¹ Between 1850 and 1869 a total of more than fifty shafts were sunk in the Barnsley district alone.³² At the end of our period in 1857 the fifty or so pits in the Barnsley district produced 2,521,420 tons of coal - more than a quarter of the 8,875,440 tons raised in the whole of Yorkshire.³³ In the township of Barnsley alone, there were nine collieries in operation.³⁴ There is evidence that some of the other collieries outside, but near, the township area employed residents of Barnsley.³⁵ The rapid expansion of the mining

²⁹ Leeds Mercury, May 14, 1853, p.10.

³⁰ Ibid., Dec.3, 1853, p.10; Sheffield Free Press, Sept.10, 1853, p.7 & Jan.14, 1854, p.5.

³¹ P.P.1857 (2270 Sess.2), XVI: Report of the Inspector of Coal Mines (Yorkshire), p.55.

³² Lawrence Morton, "The Development of the Economic Structure in the Barnsley Area," (1970, typescript, B.R.L.), n.p.

³³ Wilkinson, "Mining in Barnsley", op.cit., p.108.

³⁴ These were: Barnsley New (Hopwood & Co.), Blacker Hill (Joseph Eusley), Gawber & Honeywell (Richard Thorp & Co.), Pogmoor 1 (R.W.Parkinson), Pogmoor 2 (William Hindle), Mount Osborne & Old Mill (Day & Twibell), New Gawber (Sturges, Paley & Mason): Source: "Barnsley Poor Assessment, 1856-57," (MS., B.R.L.). No figures of manpower employed by any of them is available.

³⁵ The Oaks Colliery, a mile away in Ardsley, is a case in point. The majority of the victims of the 1847 explosion were buried in the Barnsley cemetery and can, therefore, be presumed to have been residents of the town: Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.II, op.cit., pp.266-267.

Table 3.4: A comparison of the weaving and mining populations, 1806-1871:

Year	Hand-loom Weavers	%	Miners	%
1806	(186)		(24)	
1841	2,234	91.1	223	8.9
1851	2,641	85.4	451	14.6
1861	1,488	59.6	1,007	40.4
1871	1,109	38.6	1,762	61.4

Source: (1) Census enumerators' schedules, 1841-1871, P.R.O. H.O.107/1325 & 2332; R.G.9/443-447; R.G.10/4644-4648.
 (2) The figures between brackets for 1806 are included merely for the sake of comparing the relative proportions of weavers to miners at the time. They are compiled from the militia list of males aged between 18 and 45: MS copy in the Cusworth Hall Museum.

population of Barnsley township after 1850 provides the most eloquent proof for the expansion of the mining industry; it is illustrated in Table 3.4. Whereas in the period between 1851 and 1871 the handloom weavers declined by 53 per cent, the miners increased by a phenomenal 290 per cent. The thickness of the major coal seams, rendering them easy to work, facilitated, to some extent, the movement of weavers into coalmining. A number of Barnsley linen masters also moved into coal mining, as colliery proprietors of course. The list of such manufacturers includes William Micklethwaite, original proprietor of the Oaks colliery; Samuel Cooper, co-proprietor of the Worsborough Dale ironworks and colliery; Henry Jackson, co-owner of the Cockram (Barnsley New) colliery; William Taylor, partner in the Lundhill colliery; and Robert Craik, proprietor of the East Gawber colliery.³⁶ There was no doubt that by the second half of the 19th

³⁶ White's West Riding Directories (1822, 1837, & 1852). Also personal notes of Mr. John Goodchild of Doncaster to whom I am greatly indebted.

century coal had been crowned as Barnsley's new economic king.

Most of the coal masters were entrepreneurs who usually held from land owners long-term leases of the coal they mined.³⁷ The only large landowner in the Barnsley district who mined coal under his land was Earl Fitzwilliam. Some of the most outstanding landowners who leased out land to coal masters were the Duke of Leeds, Lord of the Manor of Barnsley; John Spencer Stanhope of the Canon Hall Estate; Joseph Beckett of Barnsley; William Micklethwaite of Ardley and F.W.V.T. Wentworth, Lord of the Manor of Worsborough.

By the beginning of the 19th century, when most of the workings consisted of deep shafts, large-scale capital investment had become a general feature of coal mining. A coal master had to invest in the draw engine (by this time a steam engine), the winding gear, the tram rails for underground haulage, the ventilation furnace or fan, the horses also for underground haulage, and many other smaller items. By the 1850's a number of coal-owning partnerships controlled two or more collieries, employing a large number of men; it was a natural consequence of capital concentration. The Thorp family owned about four collieries (the Gawber collieries) where a large number of men were engaged; Day and Twibell, proprietors of Mount

³⁷ Some deeds concerning leases of coal are in the Thorp collection of the Sheffield Archives, Series Wil.D.

Osborne and Old Mill collieries (leased from the Duke of Leeds) employed about 300 colliers; Firth, Barber and Company, whose Oaks colliery employed about 350 colliers, owned a complex of collieries in Derbyshire; and Field, Cooper and Company owned collieries and ironworks in Worsborough and Stainborough where they employed anything up to 500 men. Under such a system of colliery ownership, the running of the mine was usually entrusted to a colliery agent, an employee of the coal owner(s). The colliers, and the other members of the colliery labour force, were wage earners, with no part whatsoever to play in either the ownership or the control of a colliery. They constituted an 'industrial proletariat.'

II. The Mining 'Community':

A good deal of the literature on the history of the British miners has tended to place much emphasis on their isolation, geographical and cultural. One is constantly reminded of the secluded mining villages where the miners enjoyed their uncouth sports of cock-fighting and rabbit coursing. Stanley Jevons has characterized the miners as "a class apart from the rest of the community."³⁸ Even in cases where miners lived among people

³⁸ Jevons, op.cit., pp.7 & 71; see also: Thomas Southcliffe Ashton & Joseph Sykes, The Coal Industry of the 18th century, (Manchester, 1929), p.150; Paul E.H.Hair, "The Social History of the British Coal Miners," (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1955), p.20ff. Though the latter admits that the miners' isolation is exaggerated, he would underscore their cultural isolation.

of other trades, some contemporary (and subsequent) commentators would argue that because the miners worked underground, they "lived out of sight of the rest of the community, and almost wholly out of its ken: they are reached by none of our institutions."³⁹ The latter clause is, obviously, historical nonsense but one cannot deny that the miners' work situation had a significant bearing on their relationship with each other on the one hand and with the rest of society on the other. But to what extent this created 'a community apart' is an issue for interminable sociological debate.

In one obvious respect, at least, the miners of Barnsley were different from the stereotype. Not only were they part of a larger town community dominated, in our period, by linen weavers, but even in their residential structure they were sprinkled in small numbers over many parts of the town. Such a pattern clearly emerges from the census books of 1841 and 1851.⁴⁰ In 1841, for example, there were only 13, out of the town's 107, streets with five or more miners living in each. Two exceptions, however, ought to be pointed out. The miners in Old Town constituted the majority of the total labour force in that locality; there were fifty-two miners, twenty weavers and fourteen in other occupations.⁴¹ Most probably the miners worked in Thorp's pits in Gawber and Old Town. It will be recalled that the Thorp family owned more than half the houses in Old Town.⁴² Close

³⁹ Children's Employment, (mines), sub-Commissioners' Report (1842), op.cit., p.197.

⁴⁰ But in neighbouring Silkstone, the miners were in the majority: P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

⁴¹ P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

⁴² See Table 1.13 above.

to the town centre in Westgate there was a street called 'Collier Row' with ten miners, eighteen weavers and two in other occupations.⁴³

It is not until one looks at the census schedules of 1861, when there are nearly equal numbers of miners and hand-loom weavers, that one sees a strong numerical presence of miners in the different streets of the town. Even then, however, they were intermixed with the rest of the town's labour force.⁴⁴ But by 1870 there were sections which could be described as miners' strongholds. This is illustrated in Table 3.5 which shows the distribution of the principal occupational groups in eight of the town's eighteen enumeration districts. Even then, the concentration of the miners was nowhere near that of the linen weavers in Wilson's Piece in the period of this study.

Table 3.5: Distribution of principal occupational groups in some sections of the town, 1871.

Enumeration District	Miners	Handloom Weavers	Power-loom Weavers	Ancillary branches of linen manuf.
3	155	88	13	10
4	147	19	27	9
6	64	7	21	16
11	139	25	25	8
12	186	125	77	18
16	97	46	28	24
17	98	30	11	13
18	147	79	41	10

Source : Enumeration books, 1871, P.R.O. R.G.10/4644-4648.

⁴³ P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

⁴⁴ P.R.O., R.G.9/443-447.

The notion, popular in 19th century communities, that miners were 'born not made' has been brought into serious question.⁴⁵ In a town like Barnsley recruits into mining came from different trades, particularly hand-loom weaving. The drift from linen weaving to mining, especially among the young, began with the linen crises of the late 1830's and early 1840's and accelerated in the next round of crises during and after the Crimean war.⁴⁶ In 1841, 49 miners or 22 per cent of the town's 223 miners, came from weaving families.⁴⁷ By 1861 the proportion of miners from weaving families had increased to 37 per cent of the mining population.⁴⁸ If we were to include an unknown number of weaving families which had been completely transformed into mining families, the extent of the transition becomes even greater.

During the period of our study the picture of a mining family in which father, sons and (before 1842) daughters all went down the mine seems to have been a rare phenomenon. Of the 223 miners in 1841 only 45 came from families in which father and children were miners. An additional 70 belonged to families where two or more relatives, usually brothers, worked in the mines. The remaining 108 were each lone miners in their families. There were only two classic cases of miners apparently 'born' and 'not made'; John Beevers, aged 45, his two sons aged 25 and 20, and his only

⁴⁵ Hair, op.cit., pp.49f. It is unfortunate, however, that the author fails to give statistical evidence to support his conclusions.

⁴⁶ See above, pp.135-137.

⁴⁷ P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

⁴⁸ P.R.O., R.G.9/3445-3447. This proportion represents 368 out of the 1,007 miners in 1861. In this context a weaving family was one which was either headed by a weaver or had two or more weavers.

daughter, aged 12, were all coal miners. John Hindcliffe of Collier Row, aged 45, and his four sons, aged 18, 14, 12 and 8, were coal miners, one and all.⁴⁹ But these were the exceptions rather than the rule.

Since the 1841 census was taken before the Lord Ashley Act which forbade female employment and restricted juvenile labour in the mines, it is a valuable source for assessing the seriousness of these 'social evils' before the 1842 legislation. The statistics concerning these issues appear in Tables 3.6 and 3.7. A nineteenth century Barnsley historian of some repute reminisced in 1872 :

Many of our readers will remember females returning to and from their labours through the streets of Barnsley with their grimy faces, and in such a guise and condition that it could scarcely be told to which sex they belonged. 50

Like Engels before him, this historian was virtually reproducing what many a middle-class witness had stated before the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children.⁵¹ Statistical evidence would show that, in the case of Barnsley, female employment in the mines was over-dramatized.

In the 1841 census only three females were recorded as miners, consisting of two girls, aged eleven and twelve, whose fathers were also miners, and a young widow who had a one-year old baby.⁵² But these figures cannot be taken at face value, mainly because the census enumeration took place in June 1841, three months after the Commission had started to hold its

⁴⁹ Compiled from P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

⁵⁰ Wilkinson, Worsborough, op.cit., p.251.

⁵¹ See Frederick Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844, (trans. F.H. Wischnewetzky, 1968 ed.), pp.241-260.

⁵² P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

Table 3.6 : The Sex and Marital Status Distributions of the Miners, 1841:

Males		Females	
Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried
112	108	-	3

Compiled from P.R.O. H.O.107/1325.

inquiries in Barnsley. It is quite likely that, in the face of the disquiet about female labour in the mines, some coal masters anticipated the 1842 legislation and stopped admitting females into their pits.⁵³ The owners of Mount Osborne and Old Mill Collieries claimed before the Commission that they had always forbidden female labour in the collieries.⁵⁴ It is difficult, therefore, to draw a clear conclusion regarding female labour in the Barnsley mines before the 1842 Act. It would appear that whereas, in response to economic necessity, a number of girls went down the pits, their number was probably limited by social disapproval of female mine labour.⁵⁵

The same argument could be extended, albeit with less certainty, to the employment of children under ten years of age. The crescendo of

⁵³ At Barnsley New Colliery alone, for example, the Assistant Commissioner found six girls in May 1841. He also found girls at Thorp's Gawber collieries.

⁵⁴ P.P.1842 (381) XVI: Children's Employment (mines), Appendix to First Report, pt.I, sub-Commissioners' Report & Evidence, (J.Twibell's testimony), p.251.

⁵⁵ In 1845 the Mining Commissioner claimed that even before the Ashley Act, there were not more than 300 females working underground in the whole of the West Riding: P.P.1845 (670), XXVII, Report of the Commissioner appointed under the Act 5 & 6 Vict. C99 to inquire into the operation of that Act, and into the state of the population in mining districts, hereafter, "Mining Commissioner", p.20. It is noteworthy that in Derbyshire female labour in the mines was completely unknown, see J.E. Williams, op.cit., p.64.

Table 3.7: The age structure of the mining population in 1841 :

Age group (years)	Number of miners	Percentage %	Cumulative Percentage $\Sigma\%$
Under 10	1	0.5	0.5
10 - 14	28	12.6	13.1
15 - 19	40	17.9	31.0
20 - 24	41	18.4	49.4
25 - 29	34	15.2	64.6
30 - 34	17	7.6	72.2
35 - 39	23	10.3	82.5
40 - 44	8	3.6	86.1
45 - 49	6	2.7	88.8
50 - 54	12	5.4	94.2
55 - 59	4	1.8	96.0
60 and above	9	4.0	100.0
T o t a l	223	100.0	

Source : P.R.O., H.O.107/1325

public denunciation of juvenile mine labour might have affected the census figures when they were taken. But, also, the thickness of the seams in the Barnsley mines, allowing for high gateways, obviated the need for the employment of very young children.⁵⁶ The controversial issue of juvenile labour apart, the figures in Table 3.7 strongly confirm earlier studies which have shown that the strenuous job of coal mining was undertaken largely by younger men.⁵⁷ About 65 per cent of the miners in 1841 were under 30 years of age. Apart from the strenuousness of coal mining,

⁵⁶ See below, pp.180f.

⁵⁷ See for example, Hair, op.cit., pp.75-6.

another possible explanation for the low average age of coal miners was the rapid expansion of the industry into which new labour (likely to consist mainly of youngsters) was constantly being recruited.

III. The Structure and Conditions of Employment:

The 1842 Report of the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children constitutes a major breakthrough in the history of mine labour. Sub-Commissioner Jelinger Symons, who was in charge of investigating into the situation in the Barnsley district, produced a report which went much further than any other document before it in revealing the structure and conditions of employment in the coal mines. In fact little is known on the period before 1842. But if we were to go along with Professors Ashton and Sykes that the 18th century mining labour 'hierarchy' was basically similar to what it was in the first half of the nineteenth century,⁵⁸ then we could assume that the Symons report is valid for most, if not all of our period. The bulk of this section draws on that report.

By the beginning of the 19th century the outcrops of the Barnsley and other seams had apparently been thoroughly worked, so that nearly all the collieries operating during the century consisted of deep shafts. Owing

⁵⁸ Ashton & Sykes, op.cit., pp.20-21. The authors claim that there was hardly any difference between Yorkshire and their main area of research - i.e. Northumberland and Durham: Idem, pp.25-26.

to the eastward dip of the coal measures, the pits on the east of the town were, almost invariably, deeper than those on the west. The bulk of the collieries' labour force was employed underground either as skilled colliers who 'hewed' or 'got' the coal, or as 'hurriers' (or 'trammers') who hauled the coal from the coal-face to either the pit-bottom or the horse-gates. Other subsidiary categories included horse drivers; trappers, who minded the ventilation doors; jenny-boys or breaksmen, who, in some pits with inclined planes, conducted the coal waggons by operating special pulleys; and furnacemen who kept the fire burning in the ventilation furnaces. With further division of labour resulting from improvement in both mining technology and safety measures, there was a multiplication of other categories of 'oncost' underground labour.⁵⁹ The underground (or bottom) steward superintended the operations inside the mine. He saw to it that coal was hewn and hauled according to proper procedure; that safety and other regulations were observed. In big collieries he was assisted by a deputy. Coal masters usually appointed their most skilled and experienced colliers to this position, but with the requirements of safety regulations from 1850 onwards, people with some knowledge of mine engineering were increasingly being appointed.

From the available sources it is difficult to estimate the proportions of the different grades in the colliery hierarchy to each other. The census enumerators in 1841 and 1851 recorded every underground mineworker as a 'coal miner'.⁶⁰ There is a strong indication that, over the period,

⁵⁹ For a suggestive list of mine labour in a Scottish coalfield, see Peter L. Payne, "The Govan Collieries, 1804-1805," in Business History, Vol.3 (1960-61), pp.81-82. Also, Baron F. Duckham, A History of the Scottish Coal Industry, Vol.I, 1700-1815: (Newton Abbot, 1970), pp.114-119.

⁶⁰ P.R.O., H.O.107/1325 & 2532. In the 1861 census books, however, one sees an improvement in the categorization, but not in all the enumeration districts.

the hewers and hurriers in each mine stood in almost equal proportions to one another. If we accept the testimony that children began to hew at 18 years of age,⁶¹ then our assumption of the numerical equality of hewers and hurriers is valid for the census year of 1841.⁶² Most colliers could afford one hurrier each, although there were cases of two or more hurriers working for one collier, especially where the hurrying distance was long or where the hurriers employed were very young. The number of trappers in a colliery depended on the number of the ventilation doors there were. The rest of the categories were numerically insignificant and depended on such factors as the size of the colliery, the labour economics of the coal master and so on. Little is known about the proportion of surface to underground workers, but there is some indication that from one-eighth to one-fifth of the labour force in different collieries worked on the surface as banksmen, engine operators, carpenters, waggoners, porters, blacksmiths and general labourers.⁶³ Most West Riding coal owners tended to entrust the running of their collieries to agents, usually (but not always) men of some civil- or mine-engineering experience.

As a general rule all the different categories of mine labour, with the exception of the hurriers, were hired and paid by the coal master -

⁶¹ Children's Employment (mines), Sub-Comm.'s Report (1842), op.cit., p.197.

⁶² P.R.O., H.O.107/1325: analysis of the age structure of the mining population. In 1861 Robert Craig (East Gawber Colliery) employed 80 colliers and 80 hurriers: P.R.O., R.G.9/443-447.

⁶³ Apart from the 160 colliers and hurriers, Robert Craik employed 24 "labourers and banksmen": P.R.O., R.G. 9/443-447. Similar proportions emerge from the records of Clarke's Silkstone collieries, Sheffield Archives, CR 34, Wage Books, 1832 onwards. It would be interesting to analyse the age structure of surface labour but such information is unobtainable.

the colliers paid by the piece and the rest by the day. A collier undertook to work a bank, board-gate or level and deliver the coal to the bottom of the shaft, or to the horse gate, at so much per measure of coal - usually per dozen corves. In some collieries three or four colliers collectively contracted to work a bank and were paid as a group. Still in other establishments there existed by 1842 a form of 'little-buttty' system whereby a collier employed other colliers to help him work a bank. For the haulage of coal from the coal face to the shaft bottom (or the horse gates) the collier employed 'hurriers', usually children aged between eleven and eighteen, to do the job. Some employed their own children, but those who did not have them engaged children of parents in other trades especially linen weaving.⁶⁴ The coal masters left this item of labour cost to be borne by the collier. During the investigations of the Children's Employment Commission in 1841 it was only Lord Fitzwilliam among all the coal masters in the district that employed hurriers directly. The others argued that, unlike themselves, Lord Fitzwilliam could afford it.⁶⁵ But by the 1860's more and more

⁶⁴ This paragraph is based on the minutes of evidence heard by sub-Commissioner J. Symons from coal owners and coal agents in Barnsley: Children's Employment (mines), sub-Commissioners' Report, (1842), op.cit., pp.243ff. See also Frank Machin, The Yorkshire Miners, A History, Vol.I, (Barnsley, 1958), p.6. For the 'little-buttty' system see A.J. Taylor, "The sub-contract system in the British Coal Industry," in L.S.Pressnell (ed.), Studies in the Industrial Revolution, (1960), p.231. By 1845, however, it was reported that the system of sub-contracting had completely disappeared in the West Riding: Mining Commissioner (1845), op.cit., p.20.

⁶⁵ Evidence of John Sutcliffe, agent at Gawber colliery: Children's Employment (mines), Sub-Commissioners' Report (1842), op.cit., p.253. The clear implication of this statement is that the children employed by the colliers were underpaid.

coal owners were assuming direct responsibility for the underground haulage of coal and accordingly employing hurriers for the job.⁶⁶

Except for a very short period after the trade union agitations of 1844, the number of working hours averaged eleven to twelve including winding time. Colliers and hurriers went down from about six in the morning till five or six in the evening. The winding engine stopped for the lunch hour at noon, but usually the miners continued to work for most of the lunch hour. In times of urgent demand they worked over-time; conversely, during slack demand they worked short-time to avoid the costly stock-piling of coal.⁶⁷ Sometimes the miners had to work abnormally long hours to make up for stoppages due to accidents, faulty machinery, increase of dangerous gas and the like.

The hewing of coal required not only skill but, at least, an elementary knowledge of the geological composition of the seam. The Barnsley bed, the most extensively worked in the area, was tackled in stages as 'hard' and 'soft' coal. The collier had to take care to work the different layers of the seam separately. The upper sixteen inches of the 'soft' coal, called 'the bags' by the miners, was good for gas-making; the next thirteen inches, 'the day bed', was best for house fires; next was ten to twelve inches of 'the brass band' or 'clay seam' which was carefully picked out and used for brickmaking or lime-burning. Under the 'soft' coal was the 'hard' coal constituting the largest portion of the seam - about five feet in thickness. It was an excellent steam coal. Lastly were the 'bottom softs', a stratum usually much broken through the

⁶⁶ For example Robert Craik in 1861: P.R.O., H.O.107/1325.

⁶⁷ Children's Employment (mines), Sub-Commissioners' Report (1842), op.cit., p.167. It cost 3d. per ton to lay the coal down instead of carting it away as soon as it came out of the pit. Idem., p.168.

process of 'holing' or making horizontal cuts to undermine the different layers of the seam in order to 'get' them. This last category was best for gas making.⁶⁸ During most of the process of coal getting the collier had to lie, sit, kneel or stand in a constrained posture, though work was relatively easier in the Barnsley mines because of the thickness of the seam. The making of horizontal and vertical cuts to release the coal involved strenuous muscular work, while the increasing use of gunpowder for blasting brought with it the risks of physical injury.⁶⁹ There were, of course, more serious occupational hazards which will form the subject of the next section.

It has been suggested that the collier as "an isolated piece-worker" enjoyed a great deal of independence at his work place. According to this view, mining at the coal face was a form of "cottage industry". Except for very infrequent visits by the underground steward, the operations at the face were left to the judgement of the collier himself.⁷⁰ One "conspicuous" expression of the collier's freedom was his privilege of coming into and leaving the mine as he pleased.⁷¹ The coal master could afford to allow this independence to the collier because "the greater part of the immediate cost of any mistake" on the collier's part fell on the latter. The collier's own living as a piece-worker, as well as his safety, were the ones immediately affected by what he did or failed to do at the coal face.⁷² How real was the miner's freedom?

⁶⁸ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", Vol.III, op.cit., pp.290f.

⁶⁹ Children's Employment (mines) sub-Commissioners' Report (1842), op.cit., p.177.

⁷⁰ Carter Goodrich, The Miner's Freedom: (Boston, Mass., 1925), pp.19ff.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.41.

⁷² Ibid., p.30.

It is true that, compared to the factory worker, the collier experienced much less supervision, but his freedom, such as it was, was not absolute. Coal masters took positive steps to curb some of the colliers' independence in an attempt to control them. Where an underground steward carried out his duties with zeal, supervision was quite close and frequent. Such zealous supervision usually arose from the employer's demand for high productivity and for the strict observance of the safety measures. During periods of high demand for coal, the colliers were usually forced to work long hours, whether they liked it or not.⁷³ In many collieries the permission of the underground steward had to be sought and obtained before a collier could come out of the mine.⁷⁴ That the collier had to depend on the movement of the winding gear (most of the time busy raising coal) to leave or enter the mine was an additional restraint on his freedom. Moreover, the collier had to observe a whole body of colliery bye-laws, augmented by the Mines Safety Act of 1855 which compelled coal masters to draw up special rules regarding safety.⁷⁵ The collier ignored such rules at the risk of heavy fines and possibly other sanctions.

⁷³ Children's Employment (mines) Sub-Commissioners' Report (1842), op.cit., p.167.

⁷⁴ Eli Hoyle, "History of Barnsley to 1850" (unpublished Vol., n.d., B.R.L.), p.337.

⁷⁵ General Rules and Special Rules to be Observed by the Owners, Agents, Underviewer, Deputies and Workpeople of the Wombwell Main Colliery, Near Barnsley. (Sheffield, 1859).

Hurrying or transporting coal from the bank to the shaft was mainly undertaken by children. Their main job was to push the 'corves' of coal along the tramways laid down in the gates or passageways. The nature of the hurriers' work depended on a number of factors. The older and, presumably, stronger the hurrier the longer he could go on for before feeling tired. Because almost all the collieries in and about the town worked the thick Barnsley or Silkstone seams, the gates were high enough to allow pushing corves in a reasonably comfortable position. There was nothing like what happened in the thin Flockton seam around Dewsbury, or in the Chapeltown area where the gates were so low that only very young children could conveniently hurry through them. Harnessed to the corves, the children hurried on all fours or by crawling, drawing the corves after them.⁷⁶ Where the tramroads were steeply inclined hurrying was heavier. Also, the weight of the corves differed between the collieries, depending, usually, on the height of the gates. In Hopwood and Jackson's Barnsley New Colliery loaded corves weighed 7 cwt. In the neighbouring Thorp's Gawber colliery the corves were the heaviest in the district, each weighing $12\frac{1}{2}$ cwt, when full. But because the latter colliery employed horses, the hurriers covered an aggregate distance of only $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles a day, compared to a total of 9 miles a day over which the Barnsley New Colliery hurriers pushed the corves.⁷⁷

The hurriers found themselves having to perform other duties like riddling the coal, filling the corves and hewing. Older hurriers of

⁷⁶ Children's Employment (mines), sub-Commissioners' Report, (1842), op.cit., p.178.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.177-179.

17 to 19 years of age, usually regarded as colliers' apprentices, learnt the art of getting coal by hewing part of the time. How much a hurrier did depended on the disposition of his employing collier. Some colliers allowed their hurriers to rest, others did not; some treated them with kindness, others subjected them to the most vicious cruelty. There were allegations of colliers who absented themselves from work, leaving only the hurriers to do all the work. John Twibell, co-proprietor of Mount Osborne colliery, complained: "The men depend too much on child labour; (they) are induced by the leisure it affords them to indulge in intemperate habits."⁷⁸

Of the remaining categories of underground labour the trappers deserve some mention. They were usually the youngest children in the mine. A trapper's duty entailed sitting in a little hole scooped out for him in the side of the gate behind a door where he sat with a string in his hands attached to the door. Every time he heard a corve coming, he pulled the door open, and the moment it passed, he closed the door. Failure to keep the doors closed, and therefore obstructing the ventilation system, could, and did, lead to dangerous explosions. The trappers had to remain in the pit throughout the whole length of the working shift. Like the rest of the underground labour force, they worked in uncomfortable wet conditions, starved of natural light and proper ventilation.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.251. During the same inquiry many children alleged overwork and brutal treatment. It was reported: "The kindness and care with which the children are treated by their mothers when they get back home is contrasted by the cruelty of their fathers in the pit. Idem., p.192. But there was also a substantial body of juvenile witnesses who showed interest in their work and claimed they were well-treated. See testimony, Idem., pp.243ff.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.174.

Apart from the general statements heard by Sub-Commissioner Symons in 1841, we have no information about the wages received by the Barnsley miners. On the whole, however, the miners' statements concerning their wages correspond with the picture which emerges from Clarke's Silkstone colliery records.⁸⁰ Although it is highly unlikely that more than a handful^{of} Barnsley miners worked in the Silkstone collieries, more than six miles away, the records are very suggestive of the general situation in the Barnsley district - especially after the creation in 1844 of the Yorkshire Coal Masters' Association which fostered mutual contact and understanding among the coal owners of the district.

According to evidence given in 1841 by miners at Mount Osborne and Gawber collieries, the average gross wage for the Barnsley collier was 4 shillings per day, that is, 24 shillings for a six-day week.⁸¹ The wage figures for Clarke's Silkstone pits from 1835 to 1846 do not seem to depart too much from this general statement. As in the case with any piece rates, however, it is difficult to make a satisfactory generalization because of the enormous variations between individual earnings. The rate was paid per dozen corves of coal and varied, in the main, according to the bank from which the coal was hewn. 'Dozen' in this context did not mean twelve, but any given units of corves for the purpose of remuneration; in Clarke's collieries twenty corves constituted a dozen.

⁸⁰ "Records of the Clarke Family of Noblethorpe Hall, Silkstone; relating to their colliery business and the Noblethorpe estate", Sheffield Archives, series CR.

⁸¹ Children's Employment (mines) sub-Comm. Report. (1842), op.cit., pp.250 & 156: evidence of Lindley & Simpson respectively. They claimed that their working day was from ten to eleven hours excluding winding time.

From 1835 to 1844 the rate ranged from 5s. 7d. to 6s. 10d. per dozen corves. From the end of 1844 onwards the records show a marked increase in the rate, the minimum being 7s. a dozen.⁸²

Variations of output between individuals were great. Between 1835 and 1838 the modal output per head was about 17 corves a day; but some few individuals produced as much as 25 or 30 corves and still others as little as 6 corves. Payment was fortnightly and on average the total individual output was about 200 corves or 10 dozen. For an average rate of 6s. per dozen the fortnightly wage was £3, or £1. 10s. a week. But in 1839-40, almost certainly because of short-time working imposed by the economic depression, there was a serious drop in the wages received. The average daily output was about 10 corves.⁸³ The pattern of daily output for the period 1843-46 is the same as that of 1835-38 except that the rates of wages were higher in 1843-46. A random sample in Table 3.8 of the gross earnings of ten colliers will give some idea of the colliers' wages in 1843. According to this sample the average weekly wage is £1. 10s. 6d.

⁸² Sheffield Archives, CR31 & 32, Colliers' Wages, 1835-40 & 1843-66 respectively. In stating this we are assuming that the size of the corves remained constant, which need not have been the case. In April 1844 the miners, applying for an increase proposed that the dozen should be reduced from 20 to 13 corves, each dozen to fetch 5s. 10½d. Sheffield Archives CR152 (MS.).

⁸³ In 1841 it was stated that at the Barnsley New output per head was 13 to 14 corves in a 10 to 11 hour day which brought in about 4s. The Gawber agent estimated the average output per man at 16 corves a day. Children's Employment (mines) Sub-Comm. Report (1842) op.cit., pp.256 & 253, respectively.

Table 3.8: Colliers' Wages for Fortnight ending July 8, 1845:

Collier	Gross Wages			Collier	Gross Wages		
	£.	s.	d.		£.	s.	d.
A	3	11	10	F	2	14	6
B	4	6	8	G	3	2	8
C	3	1	7	H	2	11	4
D	2	6	1	J	2	14	9
E	2	8	4	K	3	13	0

Source: Sheffield Archives, CR32, "Colliers' Wages, 1843-46" (MS.)
Method in selecting the sample: One most representative case out of every ten in the wage list for that fortnight.

We have to emphasize that the figures above were gross. The net earnings actually received by the collier were much less. The miner had to buy candles and gunpowder, items which a collier at Mount Osborne colliery said cost 4 to 5 shillings a fortnight.⁸⁴ There were other expenses incurred: sharpening charges, hiring of tools, fines and, in the case of Clarke's colliers, house rent and company shop expenses.⁸⁵ The catalogue of deductions from colliers' wages in Tables 3.9 and 3.10 became more elaborate with time as the latter table clearly shows. With the exception of Thorp's colliers living in Old Town, most of the Barnsley miners did not occupy their masters' cottages as was the case with most of Clarke's Silkstone colliers. Also, because they lived right in town, they did not have to purchase their provisions in tommy shops. But they had to incur all the other working expenses. It will be

⁸⁴ Children's Empl. (mines): sub-Comm. Report (1842), op.cit., p.250.

⁸⁵ Prince, op.cit., pp.106-107.

Table 3.9 : Sample of Wage Deductions, 1836 :

Collier	Wages			D e d u c t i o n s						Cash Received		
	£.	s.	d.	Shop			Debts			£.	s.	d.
A	2	10	7	0	8	8	0	3	0	2	4	11
B	2	12	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	9	9	0	1	4	2	6	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
C	3	10	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	2	12	10	-----			0	17	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
D	1	8	0	1	1	4	-----			0	6	8
E	2	4	10	0	10	1	-----			1	14	9
F	5	11	8	-----			-----			5	11	8
G	1	8	0	1	2	2	-----			0	5	10
H	2	12	6	0	15	2	0	7	0	2	4	4
J	2	2	0	2	5	5	1	18	0	1	14	7
K	1	16	7	1	12	1	0	1	4	1	8	6

Source: Sheffield Archives, CR 40: 'Check Wages Bk.', 1833-36.
Method of selecting the sample: Starting with the first name, and then every tenth name in the list.

recalled also that before coal owners assumed direct responsibility for the underground haulage of coal, the colliers had to pay their hurriers.

Apart from the above deductions and expenses incurred by the collier there were other factors which, by interrupting the collier's work, reduced his earning power. Some of the interruptions occurred at the coal face, like the collapsing of the roof, the inundation of the coal face, or the vanishing of the coal seam through a geological fault.⁸⁶ Others occurred far away from the collier's place of work, like the delay in the haulage of the coal or the frosts in the canals. In extensive mines, where the coal had to be hurried over a long distance, sometimes the collier wasted considerable time while waiting for corves to be filled. When canals were still the major means of transporting coal, frosts in

⁸⁶ Goodrich, op.cit., p.32.

the canals, which inevitably obstructed the movement of the vessels, as often as not led to short-time working in many collieries. Coal owners were reluctant to build up stocks of unsold coal.⁸⁷

The method of measuring and weighing coal, a function performed by the banksman, sometimes operated against the collier. In the Barnsley area the use of 'motties' to assess coal got was the most common. A mottie was a marked piece of wood accompanying each corf of coal which a collier sent up the shaft. The banksman at the pit head not only identified the motties according to the individual colliers who sent them, but also assessed the coal in the corves (by either weighing or measuring, or both). The number of motties he held for one collier, say at the end of a day, corresponded to the number of corves of coal which that particular collier had got during the day. If the banksman thought that the measure of coal in a corf fell below what was required, he would send back down the shaft the mottie which had accompanied the corf in question. This was a warning to the collier concerned that his work was unsatisfactory. In many collieries it would mean that the collier had to lose the entire corf of coal. In the 1840's and 1850's disputes arose concerning the actions of the banksmen in returning the colliers' motties.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ See Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, p.102.

⁸⁸ See Chapter Seven below, pp.392f.

Table 3.10 : Sample of Wage Deductions, January, 1849 :

Collier	W a g e s			D e d u c t i o n s							
	£.	s.	d.	Coal s. d.	Shafts s. d.	Sharpening s. d.	Debt s. d.	Rent s. d.	Stoppages s. d.		
A	1	10	0	0 7	-----	-----	-----	2 0	3 7		
B	1	16	3	----	-----	0 4	-----	-----	4 0		
C	1	19	3	0 7	-----	0 4	-----	3 3	5 2		
D	4	1	5	0 7	0 3	0 8	1 0	4 3	6 9		
E	1	12	6	0 10	-----	0 4	-----	-----	1 2		
F	3	3	0	----	-----	-----	1 0	3 0	4 0		
G	2	19	8	0 5	-----	0 6	-----	-----	0 11		
H	2	10	11	0 7	0 3	0 6	1 0	4 3	6 7		
J	1	19	10	-----	-----	0 4	1 0	3 0	1 7		
K	2	7	2	-----	0 3	0 4	-----	-----	0 7		

Source: Sheffield Archives, CR 51: "Waste Check, 1849-51" (MS.).
The method of selecting the sample was the same as
in the case of Table 3.9.

A hurrier's earnings depended very much on his strength and industry. Mr. Symons found out that in Barnsley and other thick coal areas in the district the average weekly wage for eleven-year olds was 5 shillings; for fourteen-year olds, 3 shillings; and for seventeen-year olds, 12 shillings.⁸⁹ More often than not, these wage figures were nothing more than nominal as few hurriers ever received their payments personally. If they worked for their fathers, the latter usually kept the wages as part of the family income. Even in the majority of cases where the Barnsley hurriers worked for other people other than their own parents, it was usually their parents who made the employment contacts in the first place and often pocketed the

⁸⁹ Children's Employment (mines), Sub-Commissioners' Report (1842), op.cit., pp.191-192.

children's wages. In her evidence before Sub-Commissioner Symons, Elizabeth Day, a seventeen-year old hurrier at the Barnsley New colliery, stated: "I am not paid wages myself; the man who employs me pays my father; but I don't know how much it is."⁹⁰

In 1841 trappers were paid only 6d. a day.⁹¹ The wages of other daily paid categories are not known, although, again, Clarke's Silkstone records are suggestive. In 1835 the topmen at Clarke's pits were paid an average of 2s. 6d. a day,⁹² a rate which was relatively generous, given the facts that they submitted to less deductions and, more significantly, that their work, unlike that of the underground workers, carried no serious hazards. It is to these hazards, the curse of coal mining, that we would next like to direct our attention.

IV. Sons of Peril:

That coal mining is a dangerous occupation is common knowledge and, in fact, we have in living memory occasions when this factor has been instrumental in the mobilization of public opinion in support of miners' industrial action. But exactly what is the nature, extent and historical process of the miners' peril we know but little. In this respect, one could describe the first major work on the history of mining in Yorkshire

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.244.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.191.

⁹² Sheffield Archives, CR 34: "Day labourers' Wages," (MS).

as a case of missed opportunity.⁹³ On the whole, both the technical details of mining accidents and the history of safety legislation have been fairly well covered.⁹⁴ What is seriously lacking is a social history of the hazards of coal mining - the extent of the trauma they inflicted upon the mining communities and the responses which they evoked.⁹⁵

Mining as an occupation involved exposure not only to accidents but to the long-term adverse effects of working underground in constrained postures, amidst coal dust, damp, poor ventilation and absence of natural light. Backaches and lung diseases, particularly, afflicted probably the majority of those who earned their bread in the mines. As for the accidents, they fell into two broad categories: the fatal accidents resulting in deaths, and the non-fatal ones causing disablement or less serious injuries. One suspects that the latter category of accidents occurred very frequently but statistical information on them is not at all available. Mining Commissioner Tremenheere stated in 1849 that their number was "considerable".⁹⁶ The distinction between fatal and non-fatal

⁹³ Machin, op.cit., pp.7ff.

⁹⁴ See Jevons, op.cit., Ch.XV; Boyd, op.cit., pp.33ff; Robert L.Galloway, A History of Coal Mining in Britain, (1882 - reprint 1969), pp.89ff, Ch.XXI.

⁹⁵ Paul E.H. Hair, "Mortality from Violence in British Coal Mines, 1800-50", Economic History Review, 2nd Ser. Vol.XXI, 1968, pp.545-561, attempts a statistical analysis of fatal accidents. As he himself admits, the data is defective and his analysis does not take us very far.

⁹⁶ P.P. 1849 (1051), XXII: Reports on the Explosion in the Darley Main Colliery, (Mr. Tremenheere's report), p.8.

accidents cannot, of course, be drawn too rigidly. A single accident could kill some and injure others. The fatal accidents could in turn be subdivided into small-scale incidents which occurred fairly frequently but involved few casualties, and the major disasters which assumed cataclysmic proportions in terms of their high casualty rates and their extensive physical damage. The latter kind were often caused by explosions of fire-damp in gaseous mines like those of the Barnsley seam and, very rarely, by innundations of the workings. The small-scale accidents arose from the working processes of coal getting and haulage. Their list is quite long, but the most common included: the falling of coal at the coal-faces, the collapsing of the roofs in the gateways and at the bank-faces, the breaking of winding ropes and chains, the derailment or collision of corves and the explosion of gunpowder. Table 3.11 shows the number of casualties of the different accidents in the Yorkshire coal mines from 1851 to 1856. It is obvious that gas explosions claimed more victims than any other kind of accident.

Table 3.11: Victims of Fatal Accidents in the Yorkshire Mines, 1851-56:

Cause of Death	No. of Dead Victims					
	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856
Explosion of fire-damp	71	18	11	23	14	7
Tumbling down shafts	8	8	8	14	9	9
Struck by falling objects in shaft	3	3	4	5	4	5
Crushed at bottom of shafts	1	-	2	-	1	2
Coal falling in the mines	6	8	8	8	13	6
Run over by corves	1	4	-	3	2	2
Water bursting into mines	-	3	-	-	-	2
Ropes and chains breaking	1	2	4	-	6	3
Boiler bursting & machinery	3	2	2	-	2	1
Incidental causes	1	3	2	1	-	2
Totals	106	61	51	64	66	52

Source: P.P. 1857 (2270 Sess.2), XVI: Report of the Inspector of Coal Mines (Yorkshire), p.55.

The difficulty about early nineteenth century mining accidents is the nonavailability of data. Before the statutory inspection of mines provided for by the Act of 1850, there was no systematic way of collecting such information. In Barnsley there was no local newspaper until the 1850's. The rest of the West Riding press remained largely uninterested until mining safety became an issue of public disquiet, especially in the 1840's. As late as 1849 the Mining Commissioner found reason to believe that some accidental deaths were concealed from the knowledge of the coroner and the public.⁹⁷ This was particularly so in cases where it was feared that culpable responsibility would be established. Information on the non-explosion accidents was even more difficult to come by if only because such incidents were not sensational enough to capture the attention of the contemporary press whose general standard of coverage of events, especially in the earlier period, was very poor. It was not until 1851, when the Government Inspectors of mines started compiling comprehensive statistics, that the extent of small-scale fatal accidents came to light.

Although the casualty figure for each incident was low, the frequency of such accidents constituted a constant threat to the mining public as Tables 3.12 and 3.13 concerning the Barnsley area would clearly show. From July 1851 to the end of 1857 the death toll due to such accidents in the Barnsley district amounted to sixty-five souls, with the falling of coal being responsible for most of the deaths.

⁹⁷ Ibid. In 1835 a Parliamentary Select Committee had expressed the same dissatisfaction, though not in so many words: P.P.1835 (603), V, Report from the Select Committee on Accidents in Mines, hereafter, 'Select Committee on Accidents', p.3. See also Morris & Williams, op.cit., pp.180-181.

Table 3.12: Victims of Small-scale Fatal Accidents in the Barnsley District:

Year	T y p e o f A c c i d e n t						
	Fall of Coal	Fall of Roof	Broken Rope	Fall down Shaft	Run over by Corves	Powder Blast	Other
1851($\frac{1}{2}$)	1	3	-	3	-	-	-
1852	8	-	-	-	1	1	-
1853	3	-	-	1	-	1	-
1854	5	-	-	2	-	-	-
1855	10	-	1	1	2	-	-
1856	2	4	1	2	-	1	-
1857	5	3	-	2	-	1	1

Source: Reports of the Inspector of Mines, 1851-58.

Table 3.13 : Small-scale Accidents in the Barnsley Collieries, 1851-57:

Colliery	Fall of Coal		Fall of Roof		Fall down Shaft		Run over by Corves		Powder Blast	
	inc.	vict.	inc.	vict.	inc.	vict.	inc.	vict.	inc.	vict.
Darley Main	3	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Worsbro' Park	2	2	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-
Mount Osborne	4	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Gawber	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oaks	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Honeywell	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Old Mill	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Reports of the Inspector of Coal Mines, 1851-58.

Abbreviations: inc. = number of incidents; vict. = number of death victims. Strictly speaking, three of the collieries were not within the township boundary, but they were near enough to employ residents of the township.

Though each incident was, in a sense, a unique event, three main causes can be identified. First, purely accidental factors like the geological nature or the physical condition of the strata being tackled; second, poor workmanship or carelessness on the part of the miners; last, though not least, the indifference of some coal masters and/or their agents towards the safety of their men. If part of the roof or the coal seam had been shattered by gas, it would come down upon the collier without much warning. But, depending on the skill of a collier, such accidents could be minimised. He would know which parts of the workings were to be tackled with caution. Young colliers, recently graduated from their apprenticeships, could hardly foresee such dangerous situations. But even the experienced collier, conditioned by the perilous nature of his occupation, sometimes failed to observe safety measures strictly. The bottom steward, overall in charge of underground safety, was supposed to ensure a proper and timely supporting of the roof, warn the men off dangerous areas, see to it that collisions or derailments of corves were avoided and so on. But, as Charles Morton, government inspector of coal mines, put it, "chance, caprice, custom, necessity and - in solitary cases - enlightened experience" dictated the methods of extracting the coal, sustaining the roofs and carrying out other safety measures.⁹⁸ Usually because of the lack of an adequate knowledge of mining science and sometimes because of irresponsible negligence, some bottom stewards never performed their functions properly. On January 9, 1856 a boy was killed by a collapsing roof in Mount Osborne colliery. About twenty yards of tramroad had been left unpropped "for several weeks." Although one of the workmen

⁹⁸ P.P. 1854 (1845), LIX: Report of the Inspector of Coal Mines (Yorks., Derbys., Notts., Leics. & Warks.), p.88.

had repeatedly complained to the deputy steward about it, the latter thought it was perfectly safe. The jury at the inquest passed a verdict of neglect of duty on the underviewer.⁹⁹

Some coal owners or their agents gave neither the advice nor the facilities necessary to ensure the miners' safety, leaving the entire management of the workings to the underground stewards. Parsimony, pursuit of quick profit, inertia and, sometimes, sheer negligence dictated some coal masters' lack of serious concern for safety. In June 1855 while three men were sinking a pit at Strafford colliery, near Barnsley, a winding rope broke; the loaded tub which was being drawn up fell to the bottom and killed one of the men. In the words of the Inspector of mines, the rope which was two and a half years old "had been ^Psliced more than once and had endured a good deal of service; the material was rotten and the rope was completely unfit." The jury passed a verdict of negligence on the colliery agent.¹⁰⁰ When John Micklethwaite, proprietor of Oaks colliery, was asked by a Royal Commission about the broken rope in his colliery which had caused the death of two people in January 1842, he answered with the nonchalance characteristic of an 'absentee coal-lord':

I entrust the entire management to an agent; and I merely come and ride over here as an amusement, and do not interfere with the pit at all. The coroner's inquest will give the best information about the rope being broken when two men were killed. ... It is impossible to take any precaution against such accidents. There is not a doubt the rope was sufficiently strong. I never have been in the pit, and never will go. ... I must refer you for all information to the underground steward. ¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ P.P. 1857 (2270 Sess. 2), XVI: Report of the Inspector of Coal Mines (Yorkshire), p.56.

¹⁰⁰ P.P. 1856 (2132), XVIII: Report of the Inspector of Coal Mines (Yorks.), pp.68-69.

¹⁰¹ Children's Employment (mines), Sub-Comm. Report (1842), op.cit., p.253.

The kind of accidents so far discussed were dwarfed, in their traumatic impact upon the community, by the calamitous gas explosions.

In the period between 1840 and 1866 the Barnsley district experienced no less than thirty dreadful explosions causing nearly nine hundred deaths.¹⁰² Four of these explosions were destructive on a very large scale, each more destructive than the last. On March 5, 1847 persons near the pit mouth of the Oaks colliery, a mile from the town, were alarmed by a 'volcanic' explosion from the shaft which was followed by smoke, timber, coal and stone. Of the ninety-five men who were in the pit, seventy-three were killed and several were seriously injured.¹⁰³ Less than two years later, on January 24, 1849, another explosion at the Darley Main colliery in Worsborough Dale destroyed seventy-five human lives and six horses.¹⁰⁴ At the Lundhill colliery, about five miles south-east of Barnsley, a "terrific" explosion killed 189 people in February 1857; four of the bodies were never recovered. During the recovery operation twenty persons were found alive at the bottom of the pit among the most dreadful havoc: dead bodies of men and horses, overturned corves, shattered doors, broken timber, a ventilation furnace in ruins, burning masses of coal tumbling from the sides and a fierce fire which was spreading rapidly. The physical

¹⁰² See Table 3.14 for exact figures.

¹⁰³ The best general account is Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.II, op.cit., pp.265-268. For more details see below, pp.

¹⁰⁴ Reports on the Darley Main Colliery (1849), op.cit., (Mr. Smyth's Report), p.10. For details see below, pp. 200f.

damage was so great that the colliery proprietors sustained a financial loss of £20,000.¹⁰⁵ But the second major explosion at the Oaks colliery which occurred on December 12, 1866 made all the previous accidents look like minor events. Of the 340 persons who were underground on that day only six of them survived. On the following morning 27 more people, who were conducting a rescue operation, were killed by a second explosion. For about two months the body recovery exercise was suspended and the mine was closed for the purpose of extinguishing the coal which was on fire for all this time.¹⁰⁶ Never before had such calamity befallen Barnsley; never before, indeed, had the British nation been visited by such terror in its mines. It is curious that accidents of such dreadful proportions should have occurred during a period when public opinion could no longer brook laxity on the part of the coal owners in ensuring safety, when the government inspection of mines was in diligent operation. The fact is, however, that the factors governing mine explosions were complex and multifarious. They involved frontiers of scientific knowledge, economic and human resources and the physical conditions of the mines and the atmosphere.

Gas explosions occur when fire-damp which has combined with atmospheric air in proportions sufficient to form a combustible mixture is ignited by either a naked light or a spark. When the proportion of fire-damp in the air exceeds 6 per cent, the mixture becomes explosive.¹⁰⁷ There are only two ways of guarding against gas explosions: to allow into the mine

¹⁰⁵ P.P. 1857-58 (2433), XXXII: Report of the Inspector of Mines (Yorks), p.134.

¹⁰⁶ P.P. 1867 (3811), XVI, Report upon the Oaks Colliery Explosion and with Reference to the Prevention of such Occurrences, p.3.

¹⁰⁷ See Jevons, op.cit., p.391.

Table 3.14 : Colliery Explosions in the Barnsley District, 1840-1866:

Year	No. of Explosions	No. of Dead Victims	Year	No. of Explosions	No. of Dead Victims.
1840	1	2	1854	2	7
1841	1	16	1855	5	7
1842	1	3	1856	1	1
1843	1	1	1857	2	191
1844	-	-	1858	-	-
1845	1	3	1859	-	-
1846	-	-	1860	1	13
1847	3	31	1861	2	29
1848	-	-	1862	1	59
1849	1	75	1863	-	-
1850	1	3	1864	-	-
1851	3	22	1865	-	-
1852	2	2	1866	1	361
1853	1	1			
		T o t a l s :		31	877

Sources: (1) Annual Reports of the Inspector of Coal Mines.
(2) Lodge & Sons (publ.), Occurrences and Events of Interest in Barnsley & District, 1229-1913,
(Barnsley, 1914?), pp.3ff.

a current of atmospheric air which would dilute the fire-damp and prevent it from accumulating to an explosive level; secondly, to avoid the use of naked light in the getting of coal. The former can be achieved by an adequate system of ventilation and the latter by the use of safety lamps. By the beginning of our period the basic principles governing mining explosions and their prevention were already known. From the previous century different methods of mine ventilation had been tried, and in 1815 the safety lamp was invented. Unfortunately, the available evidence does

not allow us to determine how soon the Barnsley coal proprietors adopted the proven safety measures. From the 1840's, however, the situation becomes clearer. At this time the most common method was the use of a ventilation furnace, or 'cupola' as it was locally known. By constantly warming the air at the bottom of the upcast pit it created an upward current through that shaft, thus allowing fresh atmospheric air to descend the down-cast pit and traverse the whole mine.¹⁰⁸ Also by this time the system of 'splitting' the air¹⁰⁹ by means of stoppages was already in operation.¹¹⁰ The use of safety lamps was spreading but there was no strict enforcement of their use even at collieries where they were available. Specific cases of colliery explosions in the Barnsley area will exemplify the problems involved.

The Oaks Colliery where a major explosion occurred in 1847 was, at 300 yards, said to be the deepest in Yorkshire. Its Barnsley thick seam produced a great deal of fire-damp, but elaborate safety measures were being observed. The upcast and downcast shafts were 9 feet apart. When George Wilson, the manager, was first appointed in 1845, he found that instead of a proper air furnace there was a square opening in the side of the upcast pit in which a fire-pan, about 4 feet in diameter, was placed. Wilson immediately installed a proper furnace which was in operation at the time of the accident. To ensure constant ventilation someone always attended to the fire in the furnace, even at night when miners were not at work. Every collier was issued with a safety lamp the oil for which

¹⁰⁸ The proprietors of the Gawber collieries claimed that their agent, John Sutcliffe, was the first to introduce the 'cupola'. The time is, however, not stated; see Thorp, op.cit., p.12.

¹⁰⁹ See Galloway, op.cit., pp.150-151; P.P.1852 (509), V: Report from the Select Committee on Accidents in the Coal Mines, p.11.

¹¹⁰ This is obvious from the descriptions of Mr. Symons, Children's Employment (mines), Sub-Commissioners' Report (1842), op.cit., passim.

was gratuitously given by the management. But candles were sold for use in safe areas of the mine. At three o'clock in the mornings a 'fireman' would descend to examine the condition of the whole mine and test suspect places for the presence of gas which job occupied him for about three hours. If he found a part of the workings to contain fire-damp, he fenced it off and warned the men not to go into it. The miners could only go down if the fireman had approved. Even after the men had started work, both the fireman and the underground steward made further tests for the presence of gas. Bank faces suspected to have fire-damp were usually worked by the best men who had to use safety lamps.

On the day of the explosion all the routine safety measures were carried out. With the exception of one area, which had been fenced off for some days, the rest of the mine was declared safe by the fireman. The men were, therefore, free to use naked candle lights. Even the long inquest did not conclusively establish the cause of the explosion. Most of the experts believed that a miner bearing a naked candle light wandered into old workings called 'breaks' or 'goafs' in which gas had accumulated. According to the contemporary method of working coal in Barnsley large cavities were left in excavated areas only partially filled by the breaking down of the roofs. In these 'goafs', which in many collieries were unventilated, fire-damp tended to accumulate. Some experts also felt that the upcast and downcast shafts, which were blown into one big opening by the explosion, were too close to one another to effect efficient ventilation.

But it could also have been the case that a collier working with a naked light hit a sudden and unexpected rush of gas.¹¹¹

The explosion at the Darley Main Colliery in 1849 sparked off even more speculations. On January 10, two weeks before the accident, the colliery manager and mining engineer completed the routine bi-annual survey of the mine and found it safe enough for the use of candles in all the sections. Before the men went down on the day of the disaster, the bottom steward had made a preliminary examination of the mine and found it safe. But as both the inquest and the government experts found out during their respective inquiries, many things had gone wrong. There was a strong possibility that gas had accumulated in the old breaks. Also, a number of factors had militated against an efficient system of ventilation. The upcast shaft was used for drawing water out of the mine for part of the time, so that the water tubs, guiding rods and the cooling effect of the water itself interfered with the upward current of air. The upcast shaft was, in addition, much shallower than the downcast pit. On the day previous to the explosion there was a strong wind which increased the atmospheric pressure and no doubt impeded the proper functioning of the upcast pit. The fall in atmospheric pressure on the following day

¹¹¹ The best account is in P.P. 1847 (815), XVI: Report on gases and explosions in collieries (Report on the Ardsley Main, or Oaks, colliery), Also P.P. 1849 (613), VII: Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Accidents in the Coal Mines, hereafter, "Lords' Select Committee on Accidents," pp.171f. Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.II, op.cit., pp.265ff.

possibly resulted in a sudden release of accumulated gas which exploded on coming into contact with a naked light. There were also some serious errors on the part of management. Between the monthly visits of the colliery agent the charge of all the underground operations devolved upon the bottom steward, a man who, though a highly skilled and experienced ex-coller, could neither read nor write. In fact, although the accident occurred shortly before noon, the agent was not on the scene until after midnight. The agent was also guilty of an error of judgement by not enforcing the use of safety lamps given the fact that two gas explosions had occurred in 1847. Although the jury at the inquest passed a verdict of accidental death, they expressed dissatisfaction with the standards of ventilation and, as in the case of the Oaks accident, called for a statutory inspection of the mines.¹¹²

It is well known that, though the system of mine inspection brought about higher standards of safety, serious explosions continued to happen. The 1850 Act was too limited in scope and, more seriously, the horizons of mine engineering were still narrow. Safety lamps were not enforced and even where they were, the miners either tampered with them or ignored them.¹¹³ Some coal masters did better than others. The Reverend Thorp claimed that the absence of explosions in their Gawber collieries found explanation in a better system of ventilation which, though proven, the

¹¹² Report on the Darley Main Colliery Explosion (1849), op.cit.;
Lords' Select Committee on Mining Accidents (1849), op.cit., pp.8-12,
167-170.

¹¹³ Because the safety lamp gave out only a fourth of the light from the candle, the miners found it a drag on their piece earnings. Some opened it to light their pipes.

Table 3.15: Fatal Explosions in the Barnsley Collieries, 1840-66:

Colliery	Number of Explosions	Number of Deaths
Darley Main	6	90
Oaks (Ardsley Main)	4	440
Edmunds Main	1	59
Old Mill	1	27
Mount Osborne	1	16
Worsbro' Park	1	10
Barnsley New	1	3
Totals	15	645

Sources: (1) Reports of the Inspector of Mines, 1852-67;
(2) Occurrences and Events of Interest in Barnsley and District (cited) passim.

other Barnsley coal masters had consistently ignored. 'Gas roads' were driven into the solid coal some days before working it to allow the gas to escape into the general ventilation system. The old breaks were also ventilated by means of 'slits'.¹¹⁴ But with the growth of deeper and more extensive mines, more difficult to ventilate, better methods of artificial ventilation were still to be developed. What is now common knowledge, like the fact that coal dust could cause an explosion, was then unknown. The road to safety was long and arduous.

Under such terror of the mines the miners and their families worked and lived, each constantly in awesome expectation of the hour of either death or grief. The explosion statistics in Table 3.15 of the collieries which employed some of the Barnsley miners are, to say the least, staggering. If one might hazard a guess based on the census returns, at least 20 per cent

¹¹⁴ An elaborate technical explanation, accompanied by diagrams, is in Thorp, op.cit., pp.12-32.

of those who worked in the mines between 1840 and 1866 died through colliery explosions. If we were to include those who died during small-scale accidents, an unknown number who died of less violent mining diseases like pneumoconiosis, even bigger numbers of the injured and the disabled, the picture becomes more macabre.

For the victims who died during the explosions it was a cruel death; for their relatives it was devastating bereavement; and for the town and its neighbourhood it was a period of gloom. The words of some survivors of the Oaks disaster of 1847 depict the ordeal to which they were subjected, words like those of George Pickering who lost his son:

I was filling a car, I and my boy, when a strong wind came and knocked the slack about, and blew the candle out. I set off to the bottom of the pit, my boy with me holding on upon my waist band. ... I passed Samuel Lindley, he said, "It gets a deal stronger here," I never saw him more. I and the boy kept still going forward, and kept falling on things in our way, and the air became very bad. ... I fell over a dead horse, and some men before must have fallen over the horse and were lying dead, for I felt them. I lost my lad here, as he broke his hold, and never saw him alive again. ... At the pit bottom I got some fresh air; when I came about a bit, I called for my boy, Thomas, but there was no answer. 115

Another, Daniel Crossland, depicts the state of mass confusion and panic that reigned during such dreadful incidents:

It (the explosion) lifted me right off my legs,... and it filled my mouth full of dirt and dust, and I knew I had to make the best of my way. I set off down the windgate, putting my jacket in my mouth, expecting to meet with a reek of smoke; when I got to the ending, I tumbled over a dead body, and I lifted him up and struggled with him to carry him away; and someone came and I said, "Do help me with this one," and he said, "Come away or we shall both be done." ... I kept tumbling over stoppings and corves blown into the road. I got as far as the pit bottom and then I was nearly gone and gasped for air. ... There were many screeshing and

¹¹⁵ Report on the Oaks Colliery Explosion (1847), op.cit., p.64.

crying out in all directions. ... Stones kept dropping down from the roof. ... I saw Barney Higgins crawling up the heap of rubbish: he says, "Help me lad, my leg's broke;" and I got him to the contrary side of the bottom. I and Hardcastle brought another man to the bottom. There we lay in this predicament near an hour till assistance came. 116

For Thomas Davy there was little to remember:

... Then I got to where the door was set between the board-gates, it was blown out; then I turned round to the south board-gate and met the bad air so strong that it took away my breath, and I fell on the floor: I tried several times to get up and I could not and crept on my hands and knees as well as I could a little further and then it became stronger till it entirely took my senses away; after which I knew nothing more till I found myself at home. 117

Of the 73 who died in that particular explosion half were aged twenty years or less, 61 of them were aged thirty years and below. Twenty-five women were widowed and sixty-four children were orphaned.¹¹⁸ Among the males who lived in the cottages contiguous to the Darley Main colliery, only one survived the explosion of 1849.¹¹⁹ The grief due to such occasions spread beyond family borders to cover the whole community, as the events following the 1847 Oaks explosion would exemplify. News of the incident brought crowds of alarmed people from Barnsley, Ardsley, Gawber, Monk Bretton and other places to the pit where "intense terror and excitement" prevailed and "frantic shrieks and wailings were heard at a considerable distance and for a long time." Five days later, on March 8th when 46 of

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp.64-65.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Compiled from a detailed list of the deceased, Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.II, op.cit., p.267.

¹¹⁹ Report on the Darley Main Explosion (1849), op.cit., (Seymour Tremenheere), p.8.

the victims were buried in the Barnsley St. Mary's cemetery, all the shops and places of work closed. The funeral procession that afternoon was more than half a mile long; many streets and windows were filled with people and the bells rang dumb peals. On Sunday, March 14th, memorial services were held in all the churches and chapels in and about the town. A service conducted by the Reverend Benjamin Beddow in the open near the scene of the disaster was attended by more than 2,000 people. Three days later a public meeting was held in the Barnsley Court House to launch a subscription in aid of the injured, the widows and the orphans.¹²⁰ By the end of the year the 'Committee of Management', under the chairmanship of Edward Newman, solicitor, had collected £2,010 and disbursed £375 among the recipients in the form of cash allowances, clothing and school fees. The widows and orphans were also entertained at a tea party. But by the mid-1850's the fund had dried up.¹²¹

The sentimentality of the explosions apart, how did the community view such events? Were the accidents God-ordained occupational hazards which were to be put up with? Did they carry a special message, moral or otherwise? We are partially answered in the pulpits, an aspect of nineteenth century culture which had considerable influence on working class life. The Reverend Benjamin Beddow, Minister of the Barnsley Independent Salem chapel, who preached to an assembly of 2,000 after the Oaks disaster of 1847, seized on the occasion to manipulate the people's fears by resorting to 'religious terrorism'. He told his audience that the event should be regarded as "a call to consideration, an alarm to the unconverted, in

¹²⁰ Burland, Annals of Barnsley, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.265.

¹²¹ Newman & Bond (Solicitors) Records, Sheffield Archives, NBC 286-287: an accounting of the subscriptions collected.

prospect of eternity."¹²² With a shower of biblical quotations, the Rev. Beddow argued that God used the material things that often administer comfort to human life to deliver His spiritual message:

Now He presents the most tender motives to persuade sinners to return to Him: and now He gives the most terrible warnings of the dangers of departing from Him. Now we are called to behold 'the goodness' and now 'the severity of God'. 123

The explosion which occurred in the form of fire should have been the best reminder of 'the severity of God': "As fire when uncontrolled, is more destructive than anything else we know, so the most terrible Judgement of God, and the most destructive exhibitions of His wrath, are represented by images derived from fire; whilst impertinent sinners are the fuel on which that fire shall kindle."¹²⁴ Seizing on this fire imagery and referring specifically to the Oaks disaster, he went on :-

It is but seldom we are called to witness the effect of fire on our fellow men. It is a sad sight to see any person burned; but any single case sinks into insignificance before the unexampled burning which has recently been kindled. Yet even this is not to be named in comparison with that burning which shall be hereafter kindled 'in the end of the world'. ... What then is this, in comparison with that unseen flame - that 'devouring fire' which shall be hereafter kindled in the conscience of the guilty - which shall have power to torment but none to destroy.

.....
Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? 'The filthy, the idolatrous, the profane swearer, the dishonest, the covetous, the railer, the extortioner, and all liars' - are there such among us? They will be like tares, 'gathered together in bundles to be burned.' 125

¹²² Benjamin Beddow, A Call to Consideration in Prospect of Eternity, A Sermon, (Barnsley, 1847), p.4.

¹²³ Ibid., p.3.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.5.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp.6 & 9. The words between quotes are biblical citations.

No indication exists of any popular reaction to Beddow's sermon which was published "on request" (whose request?). It is very likely, however, that his theme missed the people's more subtle reactions to the calamity. The miners possibly got God's spiritual message in the colliery explosions but they had no wish to accept them as the inevitable ways of Providence; they had no wish either to pursue martyrdom in the mines. Though we do not have evidence, it is likely that the Barnsley miners and other groups of workers signed the mass petition of June 1847 calling on Parliament to institute a statutory government inspection of the coal mines.¹²⁶ On March 15th, a week after the victims of the Oaks explosion had been buried, the inhabitants held a public meeting "to find out the best means of investigating the circumstances of the Oaks explosion". It was a predominantly working-class gathering. The meeting was chaired by the veteran radical and Chartist Peter Hoey and addressed by W.P. Roberts, the "miners' attorney" and local Chartists like R. Garbutt and M. Seagrave. The following resolution was passed:

This meeting deeply deplores the great sacrifice of human life by coal-pit explosions throughout this country, but particularly in this district, and consider it our bounden duty to try to find out the causes of those dreadful catastrophes, and use our utmost endeavours to prevent them by all legal and constitutional means; such as petitioning Parliament and memorializing the Queen. ¹²⁷

In the Oaks Colliery itself the issue of safety caused a protracted strike in 1856.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ See Jevons, op.cit., p.379. Also the Mining Commissioner's short historical account of popular pressure for legislative action on mining safety; Report on the Explosion in Darley Main (1849), op.cit., (Mr. Tremenheere), pp.3-4.

¹²⁷ Leeds Times, March 20, 1847, p.5.

¹²⁸ See Chapter Seven below, pp.397-402.

V : Miners and Handloom Weavers Compared:

There are many points of comparison and contrast between miners and weavers which would arise from the foregoing discussion in this and the previous chapter. Regarding their relationship with their employers, both groups of workmen exchanged their labour power for a money wage, and were excluded from the ownership of the means of production in their respective industries. Both the weaver and the collier spent their working day immured underground, away from the rays of natural light. But although both worked long hours, the collier's work was much more physically strenuous, not to say hazardous. Moreover, the domestic weaver, except perhaps for the apprentice, plied his loom unsuperintended and would occasionally (or habitually) emerge from his underground shop and, for some minutes or even hours, find some fresh air to breathe in the streets of the town. His independence at work was much greater than that of the collier who was subjected to more stringent work discipline. In both the linen and the coal industries employers left their workmen to bear as much of the production costs as possible. While the collier had to employ a hurrier, the weaver had to engage a yarn winder. Whereas the weaver had to rent the more expensive loom accessories, the collier hired his working tools from his employer. In both occupations the system of fines and arbitrary reductions was common, though, on balance, it was probably more strictly applied in mining than in weaving. Apart from these points an examination of two key issues is likely to prove a more fruitful exercise. These are: 1) the impact of the objective economic conditions in linen manufacture and coal mining on the relative condition of the two workgroups and 2) the subjective views of contemporary society on how the two occupations compared - views which, in the final analysis, constitute the best evidence available on the condition of the two occupational communities.

We have seen how the local linen trade was subjected to periodic crises and how it went through a long period of decline from the end of the 1830's. Nowhere was this state of affairs better reflected than in the economic misery of the hand-loom linen weavers: their progressively low wages and their almost chronic unemployment. The shift by younger people from linen weaving to coal mining, a process which accelerated after 1850, was a quest for better economic opportunity. While the linen industry was losing vigour, the mining industry was moving in the opposite direction. Until the advent of the railway, coal mining in Barnsley was a small-scale, though relatively lucrative, industry. Average weekly wages were invariably higher than those in hand-loom weaving. The rapid expansion of mining after 1843, accompanied by miners' industrial action in 1843-44, led to higher rates of pay. The gap between the miners and the linen weavers seems to have widened. More importantly, there was no widespread unemployment in mining - apart from short-term seasonal contractions of activity. Recruitment of more manpower went on uninterrupted for a very long time. The first signs of a depression in mining did not appear till mid-1855 when miners at most of the collieries were said to be working four or five days in a fortnight - a state of affairs which persisted for three years, punctuated only by some seasonal improvements.¹²⁹ The hard-pressed coal masters tried to reduce wages in 1858 but met with stiff resistance from the miners.¹³⁰ But apart from these few years, the miners enjoyed relative economic prosperity.

The wage differentials between the miners and the weavers appears to have been high, and the available figures indicate that the collier earned

¹²⁹ Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.III, op.cit., pp.61, 64-65, 76, 81, 177, 219, 228, 385, 478.

¹³⁰ See Ch. Seven below, pp.404.

twice as much as the weaver. In 1838 the average gross weekly wage for a hand-loom weaver was said to be in the region of 12 shillings.¹³¹ According to the Silkstone evidence a collier's average gross wage was at least 30 shillings a week;¹³² the Barnsley figure is likely to have been about the same. In 1841 juvenile winders and weavers, apprenticed to master-weavers earned about 4 shillings a week; while hurriers, their counterparts in the mines earned not less than 9 shillings a week on average.¹³³ Although figures for the later period, say the 1850's, are absent, the weight of literary evidence indicates a worsening relative position of the weavers: hence the exodus of the younger generation of weavers into coal mining. Many witnesses told the Children's Employment Commission that, on the whole, the miners had a better quality of life: their houses were cleaner, and they could afford such nutritious food as meat which the weavers usually could not.¹³⁴ The wage differential between the miners and the weavers, such as it was, appears not so great when one considers the fact that many miners suspended work while recovering from injury, and others were physically incapacitated, enjoying no compensation. But one must add that the degree of involuntary unemployment among the weavers was quite high.

In the eyes of contemporary society, which in this case we should look at as the vocal middle class society, the weavers compared unfavourably

¹³¹ See above, p. 145. Although one suspects that the weavers overstated their case in order to elicit sympathy from the Handloom Weavers' Commission, the figure is credible since it was not challenged by the manufacturers.

¹³² Clarke's Records, Sheffield Archives, CR 31: Wage Book, 1835-40. Both the miners and the weavers incurred working expenses.

¹³³ Children's Employment (mines), Sub-Commissioners' Report (1842), op.cit., v. 265.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 195, 261, 263.

with the miners, not just in material terms but also in more abstract, qualitative terms. Whereas the collier was depicted as a strong-looking, energetic and hard-working person, the weaver assumed the image of a frail and indolent grumbler. Sub-Commissioner Symons's statement concerning the Barnsley weavers and miners epitomised the attitudes of the town's lawyers, surgeons and clergymen who had fed him with their prejudices:

The collier of 50 is usually an aged man; or if not aged-looking, he looks overstrained and stiffened by labour. Nevertheless, the contrast is most striking between the broad stalwart frame of the swarthy collier, as he stalks home, all grime and muscle, and the puny, pallid, starvelling little weaver with his dirty white apron and feminine look. There cannot be a stronger proof that it is not muscle exertion which hurts a man. ... The weaver sits pottering over his work for 15 hours and spends a third of his time in wishing it done. The collier generally strips and sets to work as if he thought a coal pit was the very last place to loiter in. 135

One clergyman went so far as to argue that because the colliers, unlike the underemployed weavers, had a constant occupation underground, they were less immoral in their habits.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, the prevailing medical opinion was that, although the miners enjoyed materially better lives, they tended not to live long.¹³⁷

Unfortunately, there is no record of what the miners thought of themselves in relation to the weavers. But we have evidence of the weavers' attitude towards mining. Despite their relative deprivation, the weavers did not necessarily envy the miners. They tended to look at mining as a very unattractive and dangerous occupation to which people were driven by extreme necessity. In fact when work was available at the linen warehouses, some miners would opt for weaving even at lower rates of pay. Arguing for the employment of girls in the mines, William Hopwood, proprietor of the Barnsley New colliery, expressed his fears to the Children's Employment Commission that if the girls were withdrawn, there would be a shortage of

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.193; see also pp.251, 255 & 261.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.255.

¹³⁷ Michael Thomas Sadler, Ibid., p.261.

labour in the mines as many hurriers tended to take up weaving when trade was good.¹³⁸ A girl admitted that it was "a shame" for girls to work in mining but since they had failed to get work as linen winders, they had no alternative.¹³⁹ A linen weaving couple summed up the attitude of many a weaver towards his collier neighbour:

We should not like our boys to be in the pits; there are so many accidents. ... It is wet work, and the colliers always look pasty and pale. ... We would sooner have only a meal a day. 140

Although such attitudes die hard, the weavers, who were suffering in their stomachs, could not hold out indefinitely. By the 1850's many considered it a great luck if their children got work in one of the town's collieries - the occupational hazards and the grime notwithstanding. In 1861 the clerk to the Barnsley Poor Law Union informed the Poor Law Board in London :

A great many boys and young men, sons of weavers, are employed in the collieries. In consequence of the development and expansion of the Coal Trade, great numbers of the population who in former days were connected with and entirely depended upon the Linen Manufacture, now find work at the collieries, where they get much better wages. ... The paupers will be principally amongst the hand-loom weavers, whose occupation has been nearly superceded. 141

Where largely the only alternatives were, on the one hand, the relatively lucrative grime of the coal mine and, on the other, the shame of parochial relief - a pittance which, as we shall shortly see in the next chapter, was not always available - the choice for those hand-loom weavers who still had the muscular strength was quite obvious.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.243.

¹³⁹ Evidence of Ann Eggle, Ibid., p.252.

¹⁴⁰ Evidence of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hillingley, Ibid., p.265.

¹⁴¹ P.R.O., M.H.12/14679: John Tyas to the Poor Law Board, Nov.12, 1861.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELIEF OF THE POOR

Pick the Shuttle, Swing the fly
On a pauper's death-bed lie:
Hush, old workman, no complaining.
Whitethroat says 'tis God's ordaining.
Clickit, clackit, sweat and die!

(Last stanza of John Burland's "The Song of the Shuttle, 1850).

I. The Constant Menace of Poverty:

As a starting point we shall define, by a process of elimination, the kind of poverty that the machinery of relief was concerned with in early nineteenth century England. Poverty is an elastic term, capable of various interpretations, depending on the context. There is, for example, what one might call the 'romantic' aspect of poverty which is a strand of the Christian culture. When the nineteenth century labouring classes referred to themselves as 'the poor', in most cases they probably meant to convey a sense of virtue in accordance with the New Testament beatitude: "Blessed are the poor, they shall inherit the earth." That, of course, was not the poverty that needed relief. Nor was the machinery of relief concerned with 'felt poverty' arising from frustrated expectations, or from comparing the life styles of others.¹ What the agencies of poor relief had to deal with was basic human need.

¹ See W.G. Runciman, Relative Deprivation and Social Justice (1966), Part I et passim; Samuel Mencher, "The Problems of Measuring Poverty," The British Journal of Sociology, No.1 (1967), pp.1-11; J.R. Poynter, Society and Pauperism (1969), p.xiii.

The criteria of the Poor Laws and other agencies of relief were based mainly on what was thought to be necessary for physical subsistence. If a man did not earn enough, or anything at all, to provide himself and his family with sufficient nourishment, heat, shelter and medical care, or if he barely fulfilled these minimum needs, maybe at the cost (to him and other members of his family), of minimum physical rest and mental cultivation, then he was probably deserving of help, either from society in general through the machinery of the Poor Laws, or from private individuals and organizations well endowed with the good things of this world. More often than not the agencies of relief needed to be satisfied that the prospective recipient of aid was involuntarily incapable of fending for himself. In Industrial Revolution England a whole multitude of men, women and children suffered such privations and helplessness.

What were the causes of poverty in early industrial society? The basic causes were the inadequacy or the absence of earnings. The major factors which bore upon these basic realities were: unemployment, irregular employment, low wage rates, large numbers of dependants, helplessness on account of old age, sickness, widowhood or orphanhood.² Our concern will be with the causes of poverty which arose from the special circumstances of a locality: namely its economy. Barnsley's dependence on the languid linen trade was central to the mass poverty which characterised it for a good deal of our period. The coal miners and their families, except those who fell victim to the mining accidents, generally suffered less privations than the linen weavers.

² See Michael E. Rose, The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914 (1972), p.20; Roland Max Hartwell, "The Consequences of the Industrial Revolution for the Poor," in R.M. Hartwell et al, The Long Debate on Poverty, (1972), p.13; Geoffrey W. Oxley, Poor Relief in England and Wales, 1601-1834 (1974), Ch.3.

The plight of the linen hand-loom weavers has been told.³ But we can usefully point out the main interwoven strands of poverty under the industrial conditions that have already been described. The first was the problem of progressively declining piece-rates.⁴ Five main factors exerted a downward pressure on the piece-rates: the excessive supply of labour, the falling demand for linen goods due to the competition of cotton, the competition of Irish and Scotch linen which was more cheaply produced, the competition of the mass-produced power-loom factory goods turned out by cheap female and juvenile labour, and, in the face of all these pressures, the deliberate actions of the manufacturers to maintain their profit margins. The second feature of poverty was irregular employment. We have seen how weavers, supposedly in employment, spent days, and sometimes weeks, waiting for yarn to weave the next piece.⁵ Disguised unemployment, characteristic of a glutted labour market, could be mentioned as a corollary. The last, and worst, facet of the linen weavers' poverty was the periodic slumps and recessions which brought bouts of large-scale unemployment. The worst of them, already discussed, occurred in 1826, 1829, and late 1830's, the early 1840's and the mid-1850's.⁶ Such was the misery of hand-loom weaving, an easily acquired skill which people, desperate for a living, were only too eager to put into use, only to aggravate the conditions in the trade. Every linen hand-loom weaver laboured under the shadow, if not the substance of indigence. The life of Joseph Wood, a linen weaver, whose fate was dictated by the ebbs and flows of the trade, would epitomise the lives of many a journeyman weaver in Barnsley.

³ See Chapter Two, Sections IV & V above.

⁴ See Chapter Two, Section V above.

⁵ See Table 2.7 above.

⁶ See Chapter Two Section IV.

Joseph Wood, son of a hand-loom weaver, was born in Barnsley in 1803. At the age of six he took up warp winding in the warehouse of George Hirst. Two years later, he went to work in the wire drawing smithy at 1s. 6d. a week for the first year and 2s. after that. Some time later, he worked for two years under his uncle as a horse driver for which he received 3s. a week. Like the majority of his fellow working children he had no opportunity to attend day-school, but went to a Wesleyan Sunday School which he left in 1820. On leaving his uncle's employ, he wove common linen under the superintendence of his own father at about 8s. a week. He left weaving at seventeen and took up employment at Samuel Coward's bleachworks where he was able to earn up to 15s. a week. In 1824, the year when he got married, he was injured at work and lost three fingers; for twelve months he was unable to work but was, fortunately, supported by his workmates' benefit club. In 1825, at the height of the economic boom, Wood went into duck weaving which earned him more than 10s. a week; but during the economic depression of 1826, he lost his job. Unable to get any work in Barnsley, he went to try his luck in Manchester where he worked on a power-loom at 9s. a week. His job lasted only two months after which he became a subject of removal. Back in Barnsley, without any means of support, he sought and obtained parochial relief. The Overseers put him and his family in a little cabin which was so tiny that he was obliged to suspend hammocks from the ceiling for the children to sleep in. He soon resumed duck weaving but in 1829 he became one of the numerous casualties of that year's slump. In a period of fourteen months he managed to get only one piece for weaving! Sometimes he got a little official relief, sometimes none; and occasionally he obtained work on the

roads at 8d. a day. There were times when he would go without food for four days. But there was worse to come.

The misery of the 1829 depression had outstretched the patience of the Overseers with the town's poor. In December Joseph Wood appeared before the magistrate charged with neglecting his family, refusing to work and annoying an Overseer of the Poor by following him about the streets, soliciting relief. Dr. Corbett, the magistrate, sentenced Wood to one month in the House of Correction, to which he replied: "Thank you Dr. Corbett, I shall get meat there every day for one month. During the last fourteen months, I have not been able to get meat." He returned from prison when trade was getting better and was able to get some weaving, until late in 1836 when, owing to the trade crisis, he lost his job. For a while Wood worked on the roads as time keeper but the relief scheme which organized the work on the roads soon ran out of funds. In the winter of 1839 he worked in the gas-works. In the following year he obtained work as a power-loom weaver at Pigott and Newton's factory but his earnings were adversely affected by the strikes which intensified in 1843-44. His health began to deteriorate and he was frequently ill. At one point he got so desperate that he was seized with an impulse to drown himself in a reservoir, but quickly abandoned the suicide attempt. In 1848, when his health improved, Wood took up employment as a warp winder in the linen warehouse of Hattersley and Parkinson. In 1850 he started working as a labourer at a colliery where wages were better. But in 1857, when he got partially paralysed, he gave up labour altogether and went on the rates. For four years the Guardians allowed him half a crown a week, and afterwards raised the dole to 3s. a week. Wood was lucky enough to have

working daughters, for part of his subsistence was derived from their labour. He could have ended up in a workhouse as did many weavers who had even better backgrounds.⁷ Thus famous Barnsley radicals like Peter Hoey and Richard Jackson, master weavers who in good times had even had a go at setting up businesses, spent the last days of their lives in institutions of destitution, Richard Jackson in the Barnsley workhouse and Peter Hoey in a Sheffield almshouse.⁸

The plight of the linen hand-loom weavers is attested to by the fact that they formed the largest occupational group among the adult inmates in the Barnsley workhouse, even in the period when the weavers and the miners in the larger town community were of equal numerical strength. In 1861, for example, there were in the Union Workhouse, 44 hand-loom weavers, only 5 miners, and 65 from many other occupations, mostly female domestic servants, agricultural and general labourers.⁹ To some weavers the workhouse became a regular refuge. Peter Rogers, an able-bodied hand-loom linen weaver whose wife and two children were also in the workhouse during the bad trade in 1854, told the Poor Law Inspector:

I have been once before in this workhouse.
The first time I stayed for six months - and
this second time I have been in scarcely
three months. ¹⁰

Maybe he died there; maybe he went out when trade improved; or maybe he finally emigrated to another place. Such was the pattern of life for so many hand-loom weavers.

⁷ "Incidents in a Pauper Life, an Account of Joseph Wood," in Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Diaries", (MS & cuttings, B.R.L.), n.p.

⁸ For the life of Hoey see Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary" (MS & cuttings, B.R.L.), pp.149-150, for that of Jackson see J. Wilkinson, "Local History", (MS & cuttings, B.R.L.), p.136.

⁹ P.R.O., R.G.9/3447. The figures exclude those adult inmates who were recorded as being either physically or mentally handicapped.

¹⁰ P.R.O., M.H.12/14676: Depositions of Peter Rogers before H.B. Farnall, Poor Law Inspector, Nov.11, 1854.

The above is an outline of the problem of poverty which the machinery of relief had to deal with. Basically, the relief system had a dual structure. On the one hand was public or official relief administered under Poor Law legislation, and on the other was private charity initiated by either individuals or groups of philanthropists. Far from competing against one another, the two were complementary.

II. Relief Under the Old Poor Laws:

The sources on the administration of relief under the Old Poor Laws in Barnsley are extremely sparse - virtually non-existent for the period before the 1820's. Before the formation of the Barnsley Poor Law - union in 1850, the basic legal framework for the relief of the town's poor was the Elizabethan Poor Law which, elastic as it was, was adapted to existing situations.¹¹ But relief was administered neither under a Local Act, as was the case with places like Birmingham or Coventry,¹² nor under the Gilbert Act, as, for example, in Ripon or Pontefract.¹³ The situation becomes reasonably clear for the period after 1820. The overall responsibility for Poor Law administration was vested in four unpaid Overseers of the Poor who were elected annually in open Vestry

¹¹ See J.D. Marshall, The Old Poor Law, 1795-1834. (1968), pp.11-12.

¹² See Peter Searby, "Weavers and Freemen in Coventry, 1820-1861," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1972), Ch.IX.

¹³ P.P. 1837-38 (167), XVIII, Eleventh Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act, p.2.

and confirmed by the Wapentake magistrates in Petty Sessions. The Overseers acted in conjunction with the Churchwardens. They were assisted by an Assistant Overseer, a paid officer who conducted the day to day affairs of poor relief. The latter functionary kept the accounts, conducted the correspondence, removed paupers of other parishes, attended Quarter Sessions, and, most important of all, administered weekly and casual outrelief.¹⁴ There were lesser officers, also paid, like the Poor Rate Collector and the Workhouse Master who also acted as Relieving Officer for vagrants.¹⁵ The elections for the Assistant Overseer were made annually by the rate payers in vestry assembled, subject to their "appointment" by the Justices in Petty Sessions.

Within this broad administrative framework the influence on relief policy and practice differed, with the magistrates' role carrying the greatest weight. The Justices had veto power over all the rate-payers' nominations for paid and unpaid posts; they had to 'grant' the amount of

¹⁴ P.R.O., M.H.12/14674: John Clarke of Barnsley to the Poor Law Commissioners, June 18, 1836. See also P.P. 1837-38 (167), XVIII, Eighth Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act, p.1. The system of employing Poor Law paid officers in the West Riding is said to have begun in the 1820's: Michael E. Rose "Poor Law Administration in the West Riding of Yorkshire (1820-1855)", (unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1965), pp.22-24.

¹⁵ In the late 1830's the post of Poor Rate Collector was elevated to Assistant Overseer, so that thenceforward there were two under that name, but in 1849 the vestry decided to have only one Assistant Overseer who would perform all the functions related to poor relief. The adoption of the New Poor Law in 1850, however, reduced the Assistant Overseer to a mere rate collector: P.R.O., M.H.12/14674 Brady et al to Poor Law Board, Oct. 26, 1850; Medlam to Poor Law Board, Dec. 24, 1850.

money to be raised from the poor rates each year before such money could be collected; they alone could 'pass' or validate the Overseers' annual accounts submitted to the rate-payers' vestry and sworn to before them (the magistrates);¹⁶ they had power, as law officers, to penalise or forgive rate defaulters brought before them; and they reserved the right to order relief to individual paupers.¹⁷

It would appear from the fragmented evidence that the role of the vestry was more ritualistic than functional and that the Overseers conducted poor relief policy and practice more or less independently of the rate payers. The vestry usually assembled once a year at Easter time to elect officials and inspect the accounts - the latter function usually undertaken by a committee of rate payers. The rate payers, of course, had a legal right, individually or collectively, to challenge in the courts the Overseers' accounts or the Justices' decisions concerning the appointment of poor law officers. The few recorded conflicts, insofar as there were any, took the form of economy-conscious individual rate payers trying to restrain the Overseers from squandering their money.¹⁸ But matters concerning rate assessment, amount of rate money to be raised and

¹⁶ Ibid. John Clarke to Poor Law Commissioners, May 20, 1836.

¹⁷ In 1833 the Assistant Overseer denied any interference by the magistrates in the administration of relief to individual paupers: P.P.1834 (44), XXXIII, Report from the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, Appendix (B.1), Answers to Rural Questions, Pt.IV, 606d. But when Dr. Corbett sent Jos. Wood to prison, he ordered that his family receive a weekly relief of 5s., "Incidents in a Pauper's Life" loc.cit.

¹⁸ P.R.O., M.H.12/14674: Clarke to Poor Law Commission, June 18, 1836.

the actual conduct of relief were in the hands of the Overseers.¹⁹

Unfortunately there is no comprehensive list of the Overseers during the whole period. The few sources available, however, indicate clearly that they tended to come from the town's manufacturing and business community and that the labouring population was entirely excluded from this body.

Of the eleven Overseers we have been able to trace, five were linen manufacturers, four were distribution traders and two were masters of workshop craft-traders.²⁰ Given three main factors: property qualification, the practice of cumulative voting by rateable value in vestry elections, and the almost absolute powers of the magistrates, the domination of relief matters by the town's middle class was a natural consequence.

The tone of the Assistant Overseer's 'Answers to Rural Questions' in 1833 gives the impression that the relief policy was very much dictated by the plight of the linen trade. Mr. Liddall, the Assistant Overseer, denied that any relief was given in aid of wages to able-bodied individuals in full-time employment, a form of industrial Speenhamland system which is alleged to have been widely practised in industrial Lancashire and West Riding.²¹ Apart from widows, two categories of able-bodied adult paupers received relief: those who were completely out of work and those who, under the adverse conditions in linen hand-loom weaving, had no regular employment. Mr. Liddall explained that it was not unusual for

¹⁹ This is certainly the impression given by the Barnsley Assistant Overseer's answer to Question 44 and his failure to answer Questions 33 to 35 of the Poor Law Commissioners' "Rural Questions", P.P.1834 (44), XXXII, Report from the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, Appendix (B.1), Answers to Rural Questions, p.606c & Vol.XXXIII, p.606d. (The document will hereafter be referred to as "Answers to Rural Questions").

²⁰ Most of the names came from M.H.12/14674; the occupations from White's Directories, 1837 and 1852 (West Riding).

²¹ See, inter alia, Duncan Bythell, The Handloom Weavers, (1969), p.236.

weavers to be involuntarily out of work for three or four days in a week. In such cases, "casual relief" was given, "on account of the weavers' families." In the case of those wholly unemployed, the relief was given in cash at the rate of 1s.6d. per head per week, while the rate for those without regular employment depended on the individual circumstances of each case.²²

Table 4.1 compiled from the Overseers' accounts for the financial year 1849-50 - the last year before Barnsley adopted the New Poor Law - reveals two important points: first, that administrative costs of relief were quite heavy and, secondly, that, at least in money terms, outdoor relief, almost all of it in cash, outstripped indoor relief. The latter observation is corroborated by Mr. Liddall's evidence in 1833 in which he showed that the recipients of outdoor relief far outnumbered indoor paupers. During the week previous to that in which his returns were prepared, 351 individuals received outdoor relief, while only 60 were accommodated in the workhouse.²³ The total number of paupers in that week represented about 4 per cent of the whole of the town's population in a year when the linen trade was neither enjoying a boom nor suffering a serious depression. The available evidence yields little in the way of relief policy in the workhouse erected in 1735 "in accordance with the majority of the township ... to provide for employment and maintenance of the poor."²⁴ Two cottages adjoining the workhouse on Church Street and originating from the charity of Edward Brookhouse, were used as

²² P.P. 1834 (44), XXXI: Answers to Rural Questions, Pt.II, p.606b. See also Michael E. Rose, "The Allowance System under the New Poor Law," Economic History Review, 2nd. Series, Vol.XIX (1966), p.609. For the problem of irregular employment in the linen trade Chapter Two, Section IV.

²³ Answers to Rural Questions, (1834), op.cit., p.606b.

²⁴ Roland Jackson, History of the Township of Barnsley (1858), p.124.

Table 4.1: Allocation of Poor Rates: Financial Year, 1849-50.

Item	Amount £	Percentage
Outdoor Relief	2,575	51.2%
Indoor Relief	548	10.9%
Vagrants & Removals	165	3.3%
Sundry administration costs	544	10.8%
Litigation	218	4.3%
Registration	50	1.0%
Bank Interest & Commission	107	2.1%
Salaries	332	6.6%
County Rates	494	9.8%
Total Expenditure	5,033	100.0%

Source: P.R.O. M.H.12/14674: Barnsley Overseers' Accounts, March 25th, 1849 to March 25th, 1850.

workshops by the workhouse inmates. This would suggest either or both of two possibilities: the training of able-bodied paupers in a useful trade, and an attempt to maintain indoor paupers, as far as possible, with proceeds from the products of their own labour.²⁵

It is unlikely that the workingmen's attitudes towards this kind of relief system could have been monolithic. But what happened during a period of large-scale unemployment in 1837 is highly revealing. On June 26 a meeting of the unemployed weavers on Market Hill came to the conclusion that relief from the poor rates was a matter of right, not of privilege. The radical Joseph Crabtree told the meeting:

The collector of the parish rates hesitates not to tell you that unless you pay, he will summon you before the magistrates and make you pay. Now then, with that same authority, do you go to the Overseers and tell them that if they do not relieve you, you will summon them before the magistrates.

²⁵ P.P.1826-27 (426),X, Seventeenth Report of the Charity Commissioners, (hereafter, "Charity Commissioners"), p.767.

A unanimous resolution was passed that all the unemployed weavers should go en masse to the pay office and apply for relief. The beleaguered Overseers gave out some relief, whether out of sympathy, in duty, or under duress is difficult to determine.²⁶ Such a course of action on the part of the unemployed weavers, however, would have little chance of success under the New Poor Law system which limited the discretion of the local relief officers.

One sees under the old Poor Laws a relief system which, owing to its relative flexibility, responded, within the constraints imposed by the extreme paucity of resources, to the special difficulties of the linen trade by relieving without imposing the workhouse test, both those completely out of work and those without regular employment. As we shall discover in the following pages, this aspect of the system was later to become a major issue of controversy between the local relief agency and the central authority in charge of enforcing the New Poor Law. Perhaps those who opposed the new law before it was even implemented had a remarkable sense of foreboding.

The campaign against the New Poor Law in Barnsley was as intense and bitter as in any other town in Lancashire and the West Riding, short of the use of physical violence.²⁷ As early as 1836 local meetings were

²⁶ The Leeds Times, July 1, 1837, p.4; The Leeds Intelligencer, July 1, 1837, p.5.

²⁷ See M.E. Rose, The anti-Poor Law Movement in the North of England, "Northern History", Vol.I, (1966), pp.70-91; Sydney & Beatrice Webb, English Local Government, Vol.8: English Poor Law History, Part II, (1963 reprint), pp.116-119; Ninth Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act (1837-38), op.cit., p.13 et passim.

called to protest against the new legislation.²⁸ But the campaign began in earnest in 1837. On February 13, 1837 a large body of the inhabitants met in the Barnsley Theatre to hear local radicals denounce the legislation of 1834 in the most vehement terms. Joseph Crabtree, who was later to lead the Barnsley delegation at a county anti-Poor Law rally, prefaced his first resolution with a bitter onslaught on the new system:

It was never the will of God that men who are brought by unavoidable misfortunes into poverty, they shall be shut up in bastilles, to be dealt with according to the will and pleasure of three men who are above the control of the King. ... It has been boasted that England is the pride of surrounding nations. In what does she excel? If it is not in the imposition of tyranny and oppression upon the people, I know not what it is that she does excel, (Cheers). The Commissioners are now on their tour through England; are you prepared to receive with open arms, with cheers, and with applause, these men, who are kindly coming to build you a large prison for you, and to invite all the destitute of all the surrounding villages to keep you company in it? (No, no).

The meeting unanimously resolved, among other things, "to resist, by all legal means, the enforcement of this iniquitous law."²⁹ All over the West Riding the campaign flared and anti-Poor Law literature proliferated. One such document was a religious parody entitled "Poor Law Catechism" which was "Widely circulated all over the West Riding." An extract from the document, tinged with radical rhetoric, incapsulates the mood of

²⁸ The Leeds Times, February 27, 1836, p.3.

²⁹ The Leeds Times, February 18, 1837, p.5.

the popular hostility to the New Poor Law:

I believe in the existence of Harry Bruff'em and of Miss Martineau, and of a host of whores and Rogues, the makers of the Accursed Poor Law Starving Act. And in Three lousy Commissioners, their pauper-starving tools; who were conceived by Satan, born in the sink of iniquity, serve under pompous pirates, have crucified charity and benevolence, are dead to every feeling of humanity, and have buried the rights of the poor in the sepulchre of robbery. They then descended into Hell, received instructions from their father and in three days rose again from the ranking of the damned. They then ascended to power on the wings of plunder, and now sit at the right hand of injustice and tyranny, from whence they shall come and be judged according to their deserts. I believe in the existence of a common house of thieves, the communion of robbers, the perpetrators of sin, the resurrection of a revolution, and the death of everlasting British slavery. Amen. 30

It should also be remembered that, apart from the radicals, there were other opponents of the law, especially among the Tory ranks, who were no less effective.³¹ This barrage of hostility forced the Poor Law Commissioners to suspend most of their 'unionization' plans.

While Somerset House was receiving letters from some Barnsley lawyers lobbying for the post of Clerk to the prospective Barnsley Poor Law Union, Mr. Austin Power, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in charge of Lancashire and the West Riding, expressed his doubts about the wisdom of forming a Union in Barnsley. In an internal memorandum which he sent to Edwin Chadwick on August 17, 1837, Mr. Power argued for

³⁰ The Northern Liberator, Nov.4, 1837, p.3.

³¹ Rose, "The Anti-Poor Law Movement, etc." loc.cit.

caution:

I have to state that so far as I am at present informed of the state of excitement and hostility to the Commissioners prevailing in that district, it is not desirable that any steps should be taken for the formation of a Union round Barnsley until some of the neighbouring unions already established shall have exhibited a decidedly successful operation. The close proximity of Barnsley to Huddersfield would itself appear to recommend caution and delay in that quarter. 32

In theory, Barnsley should not have presented any special obstacles as it was not one of the "landlocked stagnant lagoons" administering poor relief under special Acts of Parliament - the Local and Gilbert Act Unions.³³ But even as late as 1844 the Commissioners were still dragging their feet. To inquiries about the possibility of forming a Barnsley Union they gave such vague answers as: "the subject is still under consideration."³⁴

The result was a considerable degree of confusion in the local administration of poor relief. The Overseers found themselves sandwiched between the old laws and the new, between their theoretical independence and the awesome shadow of the Poor Law Commissioners. Aggrieved rate payers, unhappy with the Overseers' handling of the financial affairs, lodged complaints with

³² P.R.O., M.H.12/14674: Power to Chadwick, Aug.19, 1837.

³³ See S. & B. Webb, English Poor Law History, Pt.II, op.cit., pp.115-117.

³⁴ P.R.O., M.H.12/14674 Poor Law Commissioners to Charles Mence, Oct. 1844. By contrast, the Commissioners encountered no obstacles in the North-east: see, Norman McCord, "The Implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on Tyneside," International Review of Social History, Vol.XIV, (1969), pp.90-108; Peter Dunkley, "The 'Hungry Forties' and the New Poor Law: A Case Study," Historical Journal, Vol.XVII, No.2, (June, 1974), p.330.

the Commission but received only evasive replies.³⁵ Individual paupers inundated Somerset House, their new 'appeal court', with allegations of having been unjustly denied relief. Such complaints increased in the 1840's. In most of the cases, the Commissioners took refuge in Section 15 of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, explaining that they could not order relief to individual cases.³⁶ In certain others, however, they urged the Overseers to issue such relief.³⁷ Sometimes the Overseers and other officials had genuine difficulties regarding such subjects as notices of removal, rating, and expenditure on certain items, but the Commissioners would answer that, since Barnsley was not in a Poor Law Union, they were unable to give any opinion.³⁸ But there were cases where the Commissioners did not hesitate to intervene.

One such case of intervention occurred in April 1844 concerning the removal of a vagrant. Thomas Ryder, a vagrant belonging to the Chesterfield Union, was found "ill and utterly destitute" in a Barnsley street. Francis Batty, the Relieving Officer for Vagrants, did what he had been doing for the previous thirty years in his post. Since there was no special house for vagrants, Batty asked a constable to take Ryder to a lodging house where the latter stayed for two weeks during which period he was attended by a surgeon at the township's expense. Besides sending Ryder clothes and other articles approved by the surgeon, Batty sent tickets to the lodging house keeper authorizing her to lodge and feed the vagrant in question. Such tickets would be submitted to Batty

³⁵ P.R.O., M.H.12/14674: Clarke to Commission, May 20, June 18, 1836.
Jos. Hall to Commission Mar.17, 1836. Commission to Hall, Mar.22, 1836.

³⁶ Ibid. J. Douglas to Commission, Jan.3, 1845. Commission to Douglas 6/1/45.

³⁷ Ibid. Thos.Marshall to Commission, Jan.11, 1845. Comm's. reply attached.

³⁸ Ibid. Marshall to Commission, June 11, 1839 & reply attached. G. Harrison to E. Chadwick, April 17, 1848; Chadwick's reply attached.

for payment at the end of each week. Batty would then submit his accounts to the Overseers every Quarter. When Ryder's health improved, Batty gave 5s. to a constable and asked him to transport Ryder back to Chesterfield. When the Chesterfield Union received the bill from Barnsley, they appealed to the Poor Law Commission against it on the grounds that they had not been given a proper notice of removal. The Commission upheld Chesterfield's appeal and expressed their horror at what they described as a "detestable system" of treating vagrants in Barnsley which was "open to great abuses." The Overseers were confounded but there was no doubt, even before Barnsley was constituted into a Union, that the Commissioners had begun to set the tone for the Overseers' conduct of relief.³⁹ When in 1849 the Poor Law Board finally decided to form a Union in Barnsley in the following year, they encountered no opposition, except that which emanated from the surrounding rural townships which feared that the new measure would increase their rates and that their independence would be swallowed by giant Barnsley. But the Poor Law Board was in no mood to entertain such complaints.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., Francis Batty to the Poor Law Commission, May 27, 1844. Commission's remarks and other relevant correspondence attached.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Petition of Darfield, Wombwell, Ardsley, Great Houghton, Billingley & Little Houghton dated Dec.15, 1849: Poor Law Board's reply attached. Carlton's petition, Dec.13, 1849. Mr. Austin's (Poor Law Inspector) opinion annotated on the petition. Petition of Worsborough, Jan.2, 1850; Reply attached.

III. Relief Under the New Poor Law:

The Barnsley Poor Law Union, consisting of a population of about 38,000, formally came into being on January 28, 1850, when the constituent townships held elections for the members of the Board of Guardians. The new Union consisted of Barnsley and sixteen other smaller townships in its neighbourhood: Ardsley, Barugh, Billingley, Carlton, Cudworth, Darton, Darfield, Dodworth, Hoyland Nether, Monk Bretton, Notton, Royston, Stainbrough, Wombwell, Woolly, and Worsborough.⁴¹ Barnsley's population, at more than 14,900, or nearly 40 per cent of the total, constituted by far the biggest single block. The Union's Board of Guardians consisted of twenty-two members, five of whom represented Barnsley, two the township of Worsborough; the remaining fifteen townships were each represented by one Guardian. The Barnsley members of the Board of Guardians, all of whom owned substantial property, were men of some social distinction locally. Two were linen manufacturers, one operated the town's biggest iron foundry, one was a grocer and the fifth was a professional valuer and auctioneer.⁴²

The Board of Guardians spent the first two months laying a foundation for the operation of the new Union. At their first meeting held on February 14 they elected a chairman (Charles Tee), and two vice-chairmen (Richard Inns and Thomas Booth), and appointed a Barnsley solicitor, John Tyas, to the post of the Clerk to the Guardians. They also formed a Committee of five to study the subject of dividing the union into Relieving and Medical Districts. In the subsequent meetings the Guardians

⁴¹ See Map Number 2.

⁴² The first Guardians for the Barnsley Township were: Charles Tee, Jonathan Carnley, Richard Inns, Edward Bromley and Edward Lancaster: P.R.O. M.H.12/14674, Barnsley Overseers and Churchwarden to Poor Law Board, January 28, 1850.

divided the Union into two Relieving and five Medical Districts and appointed a corresponding number of Relieving and Medical Officers. They also initiated plans to build a workhouse which would accommodate 300 paupers. As for outdoor relief, the Guardians authorized the Relieving Officers to continue, for the time being, with the same policy as that followed by the Overseers before the formation of the Union.⁴³ In 1851, when unemployment was widespread among the hand-loom weavers, the Guardians bought some boulders which they engaged some unemployed weavers to break. The stones thus obtained were used to repair the streets. As soon as this fact came to the notice of the Poor Law Board, the latter expressed their displeasure and urged the Guardians to hasten the erection of "a spacious workhouse" for properly regulated relief.⁴⁴ It would appear that the Guardian's policy on outdoor relief remained fairly 'permissive' until their confrontation with the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order issued by the Poor Law Board on August 25, 1852 to areas in London, Lancashire and the West Riding, areas which had not been covered by the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844. The Order limited the powers of the Guardians to grant outdoor relief: able-bodied paupers in employment were not to get relief; male paupers were to be put to a labour test; and half the relief given to them was to be in kind. We are told elsewhere how the Order provoked "a storm of protest" from all the areas to which it applied.⁴⁵ The Barnsley Guardians found the Order most objectionable and hastened to register their dissent.

⁴³ 'Minute Book of the Barnsley Poor Law Union, Vol.I, (MS., B.R.L.), pp.1ff. Also P.R.O., M.H.12/14674: Copies of the minutes.

⁴⁴ P.R.O., M.H.12/14675: Tyas to Poor Law Board, April 22, 1851: Poor Law Board to Tyas, May 1, 1851.

⁴⁵ M.E. Rose, "The Allowance System under the New Poor Law," op.cit., pp.611-612.

In a strongly worded, but coherently argued, memorial sent to the Poor Law Board on October 20, 1852, the Guardians expressed the view that the Regulation Order was an insult to their experience and sense of judgement. They viewed "with great regret the apparent withdrawal from them of all control and discretion over the relief and mode of distribution." As men on the spot, acquainted with the conditions of trade in the locality, they considered themselves "well able to form a correct judgement not only as to the necessities of the poor but also as to the mode of giving and distributing relief." The Guardians then directed their attack upon specific articles of the Order concerning: relief in kind, strict observance of weekly relief, payment of rent on behalf of paupers, relief to people in employment, a labour test for able-bodied paupers and the need to report to the Poor Law Board all cases of departure from the strict application of the Order.⁴⁶ The tone of the protest is indicative of the inevitable conflict not only between bureaucracy and paternalism, or between what Henriques calls "efficiency" and "humanity"⁴⁷ but between centralism and the desire for local autonomy. It also affords some insight into the principles on which the local administration of relief was based before the adoption of the 1834 Act.

Relief in kind, argued the Guardians, especially to the old and infirm, was not always advisable nor, indeed, practicable: "An arbitrary rule compelling a stipulated quantity to be given in kind at one time in all cases, however different the circumstances may be, is highly inexpedient."

⁴⁶P.R.O., M.H.12/14675: "Memorial of the Guardians of the Poor of the Barnsley P.L. Union in County of York", Oct.20, 1852.

⁴⁷Ursula Henriques, "How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?" Historical Journal, Vol.XI (1968), pp.366 & 369.

They claimed that the administering of relief in kind would impose extra costs since each Relieving Officer would require a horse and cart. As for weekly relief, there were cases where it was "not only humane but judicious to make an exception." The Guardians demanded a discretion over Article 3 of the Order to be able to pay for lodgings for some of the infirm and old who could not be accommodated in the workhouse. In view of the nature of the industrial conditions in the Barnsley area, especially the ever-depressed linen trade, the refusal of relief to certain individuals in employment, the Guardians argued, could not but inflict "great and unmerited sufferings." Some workmen, though in full employment, needed some help to be able to maintain large families. Others occasionally found themselves partially employed on account of trade recessions; these too, said the Guardians, needed at least temporary help. The Guardians also found the strict application of the labour test to all able-bodied paupers, especially in periods of slump, to be highly impracticable. Moreover, "it would be unjust and demoralizing to compel the deserving Poor, who may seek relief from circumstances over which they have no control, to work with confirmed paupers." Reasserting their claim to know the situation better than the Board, the Barnsley Guardians strongly resented Article 10 of the Order which required them to give a written explanation of each case of departure from the strict application of the Order: "A careful investigation of each case by themselves (the Guardians) and their Relieving Officer on the spot, with all their advantages of their local knowledge, affords a sufficient guarantee that the amount of relief awarded will not only be in accordance with the wants of the Poor but with a due regard to the interests of the rate payers." The Regulation Order, they asserted, constituted an assault

upon their independence as representatives of the rate payers and would reduce them "to the level of Officers of the Poor Law Board."⁴⁸

The tone of the Board's reply was conciliatory, if somewhat pedagogic. To the Board, the Guardians had flown in the face of common sense. Stating that they would not accede to demands for any modification in the Order, the Board tackled the Guardians' memorial, point by point, explaining that the Order was based on sound judgement. The explanation amounted to a written lecture on the 'principles of 1834'. The Guardians were informed that there was enough scope in the Order for them to use their discretion on a range of issues. With the exception of relief to those in employment, a system which, the Board claimed was fraught with "evils and abuses," the Guardians could depart from the application of the Order to the letter, provided that they used their good judgement and that they informed the Board. The Board's desire to be informed, the Guardians were told, was not dictated by the former's wish to thwart the Guardians' independence but rather by a desire "to maintain a good understanding between the Guardians and this Board, to promote a general accordance of views upon matters of principle, and to secure adherence to a sound system of Poor Law administration."⁴⁹ In spite of the Board's lengthy explanation, the Guardians remained adamant. They turned down their Clerk's request for a horse and cart for carrying out the requirement for relief in kind.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ P.R.O., M.H.12/14675: Memorial of the Guardians to the Poor Law Board, Oct.20, 1852. Idem, Tyas to Poor Law Board, Sept.28, 1852, on the problem of the partially employed weavers. For a copy of the Guardians' Memorial, see also The Barnsley Telegraph, Oct.30, 1852, p.8.

⁴⁹ P.R.O., M.H.12/14675: The Poor Law Board to the Barnsley Guardians of the Poor, Oct.26, 1852.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Tyas to Poor Law Board, Nov.6, 1852.

Although no records of further exchanges between the Guardians and Board on this matter can be traced, it would appear that it was the latter's issuing of a modified Order in December 1852, an Order which contained more escape clauses, that finally resolved the conflict.⁵¹

The Union workhouse which was completed in September 1852 had been constructed with the aid of a £6,750 loan from the Public Works Loan Commission. If the construction plans are anything to go by, the workhouse was "well regulated", for, besides the offices and other functional rooms, it had day- and bed-rooms for the different categories of inmates: adult able-bodied, (men and women apart), girls, boys, the infirm, aged couples, and vagrants.⁵² The adult able-bodied inmates were given work but what kind and for how many hours in a week is not specified. In June 1853 the Guardians decided to launch an 'industrial training' scheme for the workhouse boys in which the latter would be involved for four hours a day. The scheme was probably integrated into the school curriculum.⁵³

Although the Guardians' conduct of indoor relief occasionally came in for criticism from the Poor Law Board, the differences on this issue,

⁵¹ See M.E.Rose, 'The Allowance System under the New Poor Law,' op.cit., pp.611-612. S.B.Webb, English Poor Law, Pt.II, op.cit.,p.149. M.E.Rose, The English Poor Law:1780-1930, (Newton Abbot,1971),pp.146-148.

⁵² P.R.O.,M.H.12/14679: Plan of the Workhouse. Among the functional rooms were: Probationers' Rooms, Girls' and Boys' Schools, Nursery, Dining Hall and Chapel, male and female Work Rooms, Refractory Cells, Convalescent Rooms, Sick Wards, Surgery, and a Mortuary.

⁵³ 'Minute Book of the Barnsley Poor Law Union', Vol.II,(MS, B.R.L.),p.4.

unlike those on outdoor relief, were usually low-pitched and short-lived. Relying on official records as we are, we are not adequately equipped to assess how 'cruel' or 'humane' was indoor relief.⁵⁴ The little evidence available, however, would indicate that the principle of 'less eligibility' was in operation, though probably much less severely than the architects of the 1834 legislation would have wished.⁵⁵ The fact, for example, that the Guardians decided in 1853 that the workhouse officers would be allowed double the rations of the adult inmates, cannot give the impression that the inmates had much to eat.⁵⁶ The first complaint to reach the Poor Law Board came in November 1854 from the elderly inmates aged 60 years and above who claimed that the quantities of butter, meat and milk they got were below those prescribed in the dietary.⁵⁷ After carrying out an on-the-spot investigation, the Poor Law Inspector cleared the Workhouse Master of any charges or acts of omission.⁵⁸ Occasionally, the central Board intervened to curb what it construed as the Guardians' attempt to pamper the paupers. When the Guardians submitted to the Board their proposed dietary for 1855-56, the latter refused to endorse it on the grounds that it would make the workhouse a haven of luxury by giving able-bodied inmates meat at dinner every day, except on Saturdays, and tea and coffee at supper. When the Clerk to the Guardians submitted further information in defence of the dietary, the Poor Law Board reluctantly sanctioned it for a six-months' experimental period.⁵⁹ In 1856 a slightly similar controversy arose, but this time involving the District Auditor.

⁵⁴ See Henriques, loc.cit., David Roberts, "How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?", Historical Journal, Vol.VI (1963), pp.97-107.

⁵⁵ See S. & B. Webb, English Poor Law, Pt.II, op.cit., pp.61-63.

⁵⁶ Minute Book of the Barnsley Poor Law Union, loc.cit.

⁵⁷ P.R.O., M.H.12/14676: Memorial of the Inmates aged 60 years and over, to the Poor Law Board, Nov.2, 1854.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Poor Law Inspector's Report and transcript of testimony. Report, Nov.17, testimony, Nov.11, 1854.

⁵⁹ P.R.O., M.H.12/14677: Poor Law Board to Guardians, Mar.10, 1855. Tyas to P.L. Board, May 3, 1855. P.L. Board to Tyas, May 10, 1855.

On May 27 the Guardians decided to emulate the Barnsley employers by giving the inmates a special dinner on May 29 to celebrate the Declaration of Peace. The dinner was to be the same as that normally given at Christmas. The inmates were also to be allowed to go to town "under proper supervision." In September, when the Auditor discovered that over £6 had been spent to finance the dinner, he disallowed the amount on the grounds that it was an illegal expenditure. The Poor Law Board, in answering the Guardians' appeal, agreed with the Auditor's decision but, "under the special circumstances of the case", decided to approve the expenditure.⁶⁰

Table 4.2: Barnsley Township: Expenditure on Settled Poor:

Half Year Ending	In Maintenance		Out Relief	
	£	%	£	%
Sept. 1853	172	24.5%	530	75.5%
Mar. 1854	253	31.4%	554	68.6%
Mar. 1855	221	24.7%	675	75.3%
Sept. 1855	248	23.0%	830	77.0%

Compiled from the Minute Book of the Barnsley Poor Law Union, (MS., B.R.L.), Vol.II: Expenditure on the non-settled and irremovable poor is shown separately but not classified into indoor and outdoor relief. Though the trend is apparently one of a progressive increase of relief expenditure, the period is too short for one to make a firm conclusion.

⁶⁰ P.R.O., M.H.12/14677: Tyas to P.L. Board Nov.26, 1856. M.H.12/14678: P.L. Board to Tyas, Jan. 26, 1857.

Table 4.3: Barnsley Poor Law Union: Weekly Returns of Paupers, 1857:

Week Ending	I N D O O R				O U T D O O R			
	Infirm	Adults Able-bodied	Children	Total	Infirm	Adults Able-bodied	Children	Total
20.4.1857	64	11	69	144	606	368	700	1,674
18.5.1857	61	11	60	132	617	368	704	1,689
27.7.1857	54	9	61	124	589	401	660	1,774

Compiled from P.R.O., M.H.12/14678: Returns of Barnsley Clerk to the Barnsley Union to the Poor Law Board. Unfortunately, since the figures are based on a limited period, they do not establish a trend. But they establish, beyond any doubt, that there were more outdoor than indoor recipients of relief. This is an important point.

The earlier reports of the Poor Law Inspector on the Barnsley Workhouse were generally favourable. In 1854, for example, the Inspector was satisfied with the internal arrangements, the school, the vagrancy facilities and the keeping of records and accounts. In time, however, the Inspector's reports began to sound less and less laudatory. In 1854, the Inspector pointed out inefficiencies in the running of the school and in the administration of health facilities. He also noted that the Workhouse Master had on occasions exceeded his authority in his administration of punishment. The master had in addition unfairly opened inmates' letters on the pretext that he wanted to forestall a conspiracy in the Workhouse.⁶¹ In his next report made in 1859, the Inspector made similar complaints.⁶²

⁶¹ P.R.O., M.H.12/14678: Report dated June 2, 1857.

⁶² P.R.O., M.H.12/14679: Report dated Mar.17, 1859.

Poor Law records are notorious for their failure to give information, for any reasonable period, on the number of people relieved and the length of time for which they were relieved.⁶³ The Barnsley Union records are better for the years after our period. Although the figures in Table 4.2 and 4.3 leave much to be desired, they clearly demonstrate that under the New Poor Law, no less than under the old system, outdoor relief not only cost more but administered to a lot more paupers than indoor relief. This is true even in the case of able-bodied paupers alone, as Table 4.3 shows. Under the exigency of depressed industrial conditions in which masses of workers (especially weavers) had no work, or hardly any work, the Poor Law authorities had neither the wish nor the resources to undertake massive schemes of indoor relief. The 'principles of 1834' had to bow to some of the harsh realities of the poverty inherent in urban industrialism.⁶⁴

Official relief, whether under the old or the new system, was notoriously inadequate. Not all the poor who genuinely needed help actually got it. Even those who got some relief found it demoralizingly little.⁶⁵ This phenomenon cannot be adequately explained in terms of an assumed parsimony or a lack of compassion on the part of the Overseers or

⁶³ See M.E.Rose, The Relief of Poverty, op.cit., pp.13-17.

⁶⁴ As Rose has argued, Ibid. p.39, the Public Work Act of 1863 speaks for the Government's appreciation of this fact. For the criticism of the 1834 Royal Commission Report see: Webb, English Poor Law, Pt.II, pp.82ff.: H.L.Beales, "The New Poor Law" in E.M.Carus-Wilson (ed), Essays in Economic History, Vol.III, (1962),pp.179-187.

⁶⁵ See M.E.Rose, "The Allowance System etc.", op.cit., p.620.

the Guardians. It is true that the prevailing ideology preached against lavish poor relief, since such generosity would prove a fertile ground for mendicity, indolence and vice.⁶⁶ Thus Overseers and Guardians administered relief under the watchful eyes of grumbling rate-payers, some of whom were not so happy with the system of supporting the indigent. But, in any case, there was usually a genuine dearth of resources at the official level. The paradox of a locally-based system of relief was that the most economically depressed areas, with the largest proportion of the needy, were the least able to afford relief. During trade depressions the Overseers found it difficult to collect rates and so were faced with whole armies of the helpless whom they could hardly help.⁶⁷ From 1842 to 1850, for example, the number of rate defaulters in Barnsley averaged 400 a year, representing, at least, a third of the estimated revenue from the poor rates.⁶⁸ During the later 1840's the Barnsley Overseers, faced with many unemployed hand-loom linen weavers, but, unable to relieve them from the meagre rate funds, borrowed some £1,252 from the bank.⁶⁹ Official relief was ill-equipped, indeed utterly helpless, for dealing with such major cataclysms like economic slumps and mining disasters. After the Oaks Colliery explosion of 1866 a poet had much praise for

All who possess a feeling of heart
Are coming forth to do their part,
To storm the dreaded foe;
.....

⁶⁶ See Poynter, op.cit., passim.

⁶⁷ See M.E.Rose, The Relief of Poverty, op.cit., p.36.

⁶⁸ "Information, Poor Rate Defaulters, 1842-1851," (MS., B.R.L.)

⁶⁹ P.R.O., M.H.12/14674: Two Petitions of the Barnsley Overseers to the Poor Law Board, 1850 & 1851.

but the Union Guardians were taunted:

Yet those who hold the parish store,
And should be guardians of the poor,
Are lagging in the rear.
They see that other help is nigh
And little heed the orphan's cry,
Or widowed mother's tear. 70

Where the official system of relief was vexed by a chronic paucity of resources, there was plenty of room for private initiative, unfettered by the shackles of officialdom. Moreover, there was a strong, ideologically inspired contemporary opinion that, among the poor, proper charity, privately given, was evocative of gratitude to and respect for their benevolent betters.⁷¹

IV. Unofficial Charity:

In his stimulating criticism of David Owen's book on philanthropy⁷² Brian Harrison calls for a broader definition of the subject, going beyond the financial and other material benefits extended by the rich to the needy. Thus he sees as artificial the distinction between the classical philanthropy of alleviating misery by distributing money and the unconventional one of seeking to achieve the same objective through such acts of social reform as creating equality of opportunity or improving working class habits of temperance, industry and frugality.⁷³ There is some merit in

⁷⁰ G. Hanby, The Miner's Grave, (Barnsley, 1866), p.7.

⁷¹ See S. & B. Webb, English Poor Law History, Pt.II, op.cit., pp.16-17.

⁷² David Owen, English Philanthropy, 1660-1960, (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).

⁷³ Brian Harrison, "Philanthropy and the Victorians," Victorian Studies, Vol.IX, No.4, June 1966, p.355.

such an approach of examining as a whole what, at one level, are two sides of the same coin. But, in another profound sense, classical charity, as we know it, belongs to a different genre. There is a fundamental difference between alleviating poverty by doling out money and goods, and attempting to eliminate it through social reform. The former is static, the latter is dynamic; the one accepts poverty as a divinely ordered fact of life which can only be palliated; the other seeks to stamp it out. Strictly speaking, educational or temperance reformers were no more philanthropic than were the Chartists inasmuch as both classes of 'reformers' sought to improve the material and moral conditions of the poor by applying therapy on society. There is a strong case, therefore, for treating classical charity as a separate subject.

In nineteenth century England three types of private charity predominated: charity societies, personal endowments and bequests, and ad hoc relief committees set up to deal with emergency cases of acute distress such as there arose from trade depressions and other disasters like mining accidents. We do not have the statistical evidence to reject or go along with the claim that such private charity, compared with official relief, was "very much the senior partner" in the provision of welfare.⁷⁴ But the sheer frequency of private initiative in poor relief is itself impressive, and we hope to demonstrate that there were times when such initiative was the only recourse to which the helpless could turn. We know more about charitable bequests and collective emergency relief measures than we do about on-going benevolent organizations. Only four local charitable

⁷⁴ C.G.Hanson, "Welfare before the Welfare State," in R.M.Hartwell et al, The Long Debate on Poverty, op.cit., p.116.

organizations, active in the very early part of the century, were registered with the Registrar of Friendly Societies: the Charitable Society, first registered in October 1794 and still active in 1818; the Charitable Association, first registered in July 1809 and still active in 1822; the Barnsley Benevolent Society and its female counterpart, both founded in January 1811 and apparently still active by 1826.⁷⁵ There is no trace of the course of their development, nature or composition of their memberships, or the extent of their activities.

At the time of the great inquiry by the Charity Commissioners, Barnsley had seven active charitable bequests most of which had originated in the seventeenth century. The Shaw Lands Charity was the biggest. By a deed dated 1558 about 50 acres of land were conveyed to Robert Twaites of Barnsley by Robert Bosville of London to hold in trust for "the commonwealth and profit" of the inhabitants of Barnsley: "towards the making forth of the common soldiers or carts there, for the true service of their Prince or Princes in their wars, paying of their common tax or taxes, repairing of their church or highways, making or amending of their common butts, stocks, pinfold and wells there, or in and about, something or things pertaining to the whole commonwealth of the township..."⁷⁶ The lands were subsequently handed over to successive generations of trustees; surviving trustees appointed or co-opted new ones. In 1824 only two of the

⁷⁵ P.R.O., F.S.11/2.

⁷⁶ Charity Commissioners (1826-27), op.cit., p.765. Also Barnsley Historical Almanack, (Barnsley, 1864, B.R.L.), p.57.

five surviving trustees were residents of Barnsley. At the time of the inquiry in 1826 the trust estate was let to 12 annual tenants who paid rents totalling £179. 17s. 4d. The rent money was used for repairing St. Mary's Church, paying the organist and the sexton, repairing public wells and pumps, occasionally repairing the highways, and, as the only aspect of poor relief, buying coffins for poor people. Allocation of the money to any of these items depended on "the exigency of the case, or the discretion of the trustees."⁷⁷ The Charity Commissioners heard many allegations of maladministration of the Charity. Witnesses claimed that it was run by a self-perpetuating clique who were after promoting their own name rather than the common good. Some trustees represented no one, since they were non-residents. Public wells were not attended to and some bills were unpaid. The accounts were not audited and, it was alleged, the inhabitants had lost their former right to question the trustees on the running of the estate at a public vestry.⁷⁸

Another charity in the form of land was the Cutler's Charity. By his will of 1622, Thomas Cutler bequeathed £40 to be bestowed in land "for the relief of the most needful poor of the Parish of Silkstone." In 1638 Ellen Cutler, as executrix of her husband's will, bought two parcels of land in Barnsley: 'the Upper Amyas Close' and 'the Nearer Amyas Close' which she handed over to the Charity. The rent from the land was to be divided up as follows: the Barnsley poor were to have one half and the rest of the poor in the Silkstone parish, the other half, to be distributed

⁷⁷ Charity Commissioners, (1826-27), op.cit., p.766.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.766-767.

at the discretion of Sir Gervas Cutler, Thomas Cutler's son, and his heirs. The Charity got an extra acre from the enclosure award of 1777. When coal was discovered under the Charity land, a reorganization of the Charity was ordered by a decree of the Court of Chancery dated January 29, 1783. Following this, the Charity was brought under the management of eight trustees, including such worthies as the Earl of Strafford, Francis Edmunds, John and Joseph Beckett. The business of the estate, namely the payment of rent, the auditing of the accounts and the allocation of the funds for relief, was transacted once a year on Easter Tuesday, in the presence of "any of the trustees or any of the Ministers and Churchwarden or any other inhabitants." The Charity Commissioners found that, of the original trustees Joseph Beckett was the only one surviving, in whom alone the Charity was vested. The plots of land were let to two tenants at the annual rent of £28. The share for each township was handed to the respective Overseers who in turn disbursed it among their poor, priority generally being given to those who got no relief from the poor rates.⁷⁹ In 1854-55 the Trustees sold two of the pieces of land to the Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway at £1,343.⁸⁰

In his will dated January 1646, Edmund Rogers of Barnsley bequeathed all his tithes of corn and grain together with rents on parcels of land in Thorp Audlin and Wentbridge in the parish of Badsworth to be used by the Overseers for the relief of the poor of Barnsley. The Charity Commissioners estimated in 1826 that the Rogers Charity was worth about £60 a year.⁸¹ As late as 1906 it was stated that £66 a year was applied in aid of the poor from this source.⁸² Another charity in the form of rentage

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.760-763.

⁸⁰ Lodge's Almanack, (Barnsley, 1906), p.27ff.

⁸¹ Charity Commissioners, (1826-27), op.cit., pp.767-768.

⁸² Lodge's Almanack, loc.cit.

from land was the Rhodes' gift of 6s. 8d. a year from a plot of land in Ardsley. It dated back to 1658 and was normally credited to the general account of the poor rate.⁸³

Edward Brookhouse of Doncaster left money in 1493 for the building and maintaining of three cottages on Church Street to be used as almshouses. He also bequeathed rents from cottages and land in Barnsley worth 33s. 4d. a year to be used for the relief of the poor. Up to the time of the Charity Commissioners' inquiry the three cottages, adjoining the workhouse, were administratively linked to this institution. One of the cottages housed the Workhouse Master and the other two were workshops for the workhouse inmates. The 33s. 4d. annuity, paid in two instalments, was, like the Rhodes' gift, carried to the general account of the poor rate.⁸⁴ It was remarked in 1906 that the Charity had disappeared: that since 1827 no rents on property had been paid.⁸⁵

The remaining two Charities were educational. The Barnsley Grammar School originated from the gift of Thomas Keresforth, a Barnsley landowner, who, by his will of June 1660, gave to the inhabitants of Barnsley and Dodworth a house and an adjacent messuage on Church Street to be used for a Grammar School. The house was to serve as a school house and the messuage, called St. Mary's, as a residence for the school master. Also, fee-farm rents from lands and buildings in Barnsley, Dodworth, Silkstone, Hoyland Swaine and Cawthorne were to pay the school master's salary.

⁸³ Charity Commissioners (1826-27), op.cit., pp.768.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.767.

⁸⁵ Lodge's Almanack, loc.cit.

Children whose parents were worth less than £200 "in lands and debtless goods," would be taught gratuitously and those whose parents were valued at £200 or more were to pay half of the fees normally paid in similar schools. There was to be no discrimination between rich and poor in the teaching of the children. The original school building was pulled down in 1769 and another one erected in its place by public subscription. As in the case of many of the other Charities, most of the trustees were landed gentlemen living far away from Barnsley. Of the six trustees in 1826, only Joseph Beckett was resident in the town. The Charity Commissioners found out that some of the farm rents had, through neglect, not been received for many years. The school master was paid £50 a year and only about £19 of this came from the rents. The rest came from school fees as, contrary to Keresforth's will, no student was being taught gratuitously. The one hundred or so elementary school pupils paid 10s. quarterly for reading, 15s. for reading and writing, or 21s. for reading, writing and arithmetic. Only a few boarders were admitted as Latin scholars. From the amount of fees paid, it would appear that the school was out of reach of the children of the poor.⁸⁶

The Barnsley National school was connected with the Charity of Joseph Ellis of Brampton who in January 1711 left estates which yielded a considerable sum of money to schools in Barnsley, Brampton, Hemingfield "and elsewhere". Up to 1814 a sum of £25 a year was paid by the trustees for the education of twenty poor children of Barnsley. In 1814 the trustees bought a site on Pitt Street for a school building which was put up at a cost of £700

⁸⁶ Ibid. Charity Commissioners (1826-27), op.cit., pp.764-765.

from the trustees and the general public. Thenceforward, the school received an annual maintenance grant from the Charity - quoted at £45 in 1826 and £100 in 1906.⁸⁷

The only outstanding endowment of the 19th Century was the Beckett Dispensary, (now Beckett Hospital) erected in 1864 by John Staniforth Beckett heir to Joseph Beckett, the man who dominated so much of the public and business life of Barnsley.⁸⁸ John Beckett further donated to the hospital a sum of £7,000 towards a fund for providing hospital beds. As Barnsley's first ever infirmary, the Beckett Dispensary was of tremendous importance in helping the victims of mining accidents. John Beckett, who died in 1868, also left sums of money amounting to about £4,000 to churches and different charity organisations - national as well as local.⁸⁹

Although it is difficult to generalize about the above charity bequests, two salient features seem to emerge. The charities tended to be under the nominal control of a few outstanding families, especially members of the landed gentry, most of whom owned land in Barnsley but lived in other parts of the country. The result was that the Charities came under the effective control of still fewer local 'worthies', especially the members of the Beckett family, who were accountable to no one. Following from this was the fact that most of the charities were badly managed, if not entirely neglected. The Charity Commissioners heard complaints of trustees' mismanagement of the Shaw Lands, the Keresforth 'Grammar' School and the Cutler's Charity. The Commissioners also found out that two small Charities worth £52 a year in aid of widows and other poor people had completely disappeared as no one had bothered to collect the money.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Charity Commissioners (1826-27), op.cit., p.768; Lodge's Almanack, loc.cit.

⁸⁸ See Chapter One, above p.47.

⁸⁹ Jos. Wilkinson, Worthies, Families & Celebrities of Barnsley & District, (1853), pp.80-81.

⁹⁰ Charity Commissioners, (1826-27), op.cit., p.763 et passim.

Though the funds from the charity bequests were fairly regular and benefited some needy individuals, they were too meagre to make an impressive dent on the general problem of poverty in the town. In times of trade recessions and slumps, a characteristic feature of 19th century linen production,⁹¹ both the permanent private charitable institutions and the official parochial charity found themselves utterly unable to cope with misery on a large scale. Faced with widespread unemployment, the town's philanthropists, mainly manufacturers and members of the clergy, usually organized 'relief committees' for collecting money and giving relief to the distressed. In our period such emergency relief was mobilized in 1826, 1829, 1837, 1838, 1840 and 1855. Similar relief was organized for the victims of either injury or bereavement resulting from mining accidents.

The town's response to the recession of 1826 was the organization on May 25 of an eighteen-member 'Committee for the Relief of the Unemployed Workmen' consisting of eleven linen manufacturers, three retailers and an Anglican clergyman. Within a period of thirteen weeks the Committee received £482, of which £282 came from local subscriptions and £200 from the London Manufacturers Relief Committee.⁹² The list of subscriptions shows that the majority of the benefactors were local employers, especially linen manufacturers, most of whom gave from £1 to £5 a head. By the end of August the Committee had disbursed £404 to hundreds of unemployed workmen and their families, the weekly average of the relief approximating 780 persons. The original idea was to distribute relief according to need. The town was divided up into districts each of which was assigned two 'visitors' who went from door to door, taking notes of individual

⁹¹ See above, Chapter Two, Section IV.

⁹² For the function of the Manufacturers Relief Committee in 1826 see Bythell, op.cit., pp.242-243.

circumstances - an exercise which resulted in a list of the "most distressed" families. But soon after, in anticipation of administrative complications and possible charges of favouritism, the Committee decided to give out a flat weekly rate of 1s. 6d. per head. The able-bodied men and boys belonging to the parish were given work and, in accordance with the expressed wish of the Manufacturers' Relief Committee, remunerated according both to need and effort. The rate for men ranged from 1s. to 1s. 3d., and for boys 4d. to 6d. a day. Under the pressure of cash shortage, the Relief Committee left the able-bodied males belonging to other parishes to fend for themselves. It would appear that the Committee ran out of funds before the distress was over.⁹³

The more traumatic crisis of 1829 evoked fairly generous responses from local as well as outside donors. Earl Fitzwilliam, whose aid the weavers went to solicit in June,⁹⁴ gave out £25 a week until around November when the worst of the depression was over. Lord Wharncliffe of Wortley Hall donated £20. The Manufacturers' Relief Committee in London sent £150. Many employers gave out bread to their men, and other local benefactors gave "liberally".⁹⁵ But because of the enormity of the crisis, the dole amounted to a drop in the ocean. Non-parishioners were generally discriminated against, which was why many unemployed Irish weavers applied to be sent back home.⁹⁶ It was reported in October that some of the unemployed worked on the roads for 8d. a day - a rate much lower than that paid in 1826 for similar labour. Even then, there were not enough hammers, picks and shovels to supply all who applied for relief of this kind. In the face of such helplessness, one weaver informed a Sheffield newspaper, "begging is an honest trade and we shall labour at it."⁹⁷

⁹³ "Report of the Barnsley Committee for the Relief of the Unemployed Workmen:" Cusworth Hall Museum (Barnsley Drawer).

⁹⁴ See above, Ch.Two, p.128.

⁹⁵ Eli Hoyle, History of Barnsley & the Surrounding District (n.d., B.R.L.), pp.263f.

⁹⁶ See above, Ch.Two, p.129.

⁹⁷ The Sheffield Iris, Oct. 27, 1829, p.3.

In June 1837, when the Overseers were besieged by a crowd of unemployed weavers asking for relief,⁹⁸ the alarmed 'principal inhabitants' set up a Relief Committee which in its first week of operation examined 350 cases and distributed £13 in cash and 369 stones of flour among 275 families.⁹⁹ The Committee's pre-occupation was to afford relief to the unemployed by creating work for them. The town's streets, especially in slummy Wilson's Piece, were drained and repaired. Well over half of the £155 collected by the Committee went to finance this kind of manual labour; about a third paid for flour and the running of the soup kitchen; and the rest was paid in cash to widows and similar cases. By the end of September the fund had been virtually exhausted.¹⁰⁰

As the economic crisis and the concomitant suffering continued to deepen in the following year, the unofficial relief effort was resumed. On February 23, 1838 a public meeting was held in the Court House for the purpose of raising money to relieve unemployed weavers. The meeting was addressed by four prominent linen manufacturers and a solicitor, all of whom passionately appealed to the assembled to exercise their utmost generosity. A Relief Committee was then formed and a substantial sum was raised on that occasion.¹⁰¹ No sooner did the Committee start its work than it got involved in a melodramatic incident. The Committee had reached agreement with Joshua Wragg, a baker, for the latter to supply bread - six-pound and eight-pound loaves - to those on relief. But clever Wragg supplied four-pound and six-pound loaves instead, charging the originally agreed price. The Relief Committee allegedly ignored complaints

⁹⁸ See above, p. 224f.

⁹⁹ The Leeds Intelligencer, July 1, 1837.

¹⁰⁰ The Leeds Times, Sept. 30, 1837, p.5.

¹⁰¹ The Northern Star, March 8, 1838, p.5.

about the matter, at which point incensed public opinion among the Barnsley workers decided to take action. On February 26 Wragg's effigy was paraded through the streets and bills went round announcing that he would shortly be tried on May Day Green. Within an hour, "Thousands" were gathered on the spot to witness the 'trial'. The meeting appointed P.H. (most certainly Chartist leader, Peter Hoey) as 'judge' and J.C. (undoubtedly another Chartist leader Joseph Crabtree) as 'counsel for the prosecution'. The meeting designated itself as the 'jury'. Although "sums" (of money) were offered for a 'defence counsel', no one was willing to undertake the job. Many witnesses gave evidence to the effect that the 'prisoner' had given short bread to the poor. When the 'judge' called for a verdict, every hand went up, and there was a general cry of: "guilty, hang him." The 'judge' sentenced the 'prisoner' to be suspended on a lamp post and burned, which was done in front of Wragg's own bakery. The 'trial' was not without consequence, for, while Wragg's effigy was being burned, he closed his shop and went to attend a meeting of the Relief Committee. A notice from the Committee went round that evening stating that Wragg had made "full restitution" to the Committee.¹⁰² The incident, it would appear, was as much a protest against shopkeeper profiteering as it was an indication that workingmen in need were not always idle objects or charitable acts; that, probably, at times they considered relief, official or unofficial, as an entitlement which, in justice, the rich owed them.

The trade revival which began in the autumn of 1838 was short lived. Early in 1840 reports from Barnsley talked of the weavers experiencing "the most trying privations" and some of them having been "reduced to beggary".¹⁰³ The Relief Committee which was organized on March 2 collected

¹⁰² Ibid., Mar.10, 1838, p.5; Mar. 24, 1838, p.5.

¹⁰³ John H. Burland, Annals of Barnsley, Vol.II, pp.131 & 136.

about £260, but was forced to wind up its operations in June for lack of funds. Apart from the five hundred or so families to which it gave casual relief, the Committee employed an average of sixty individuals daily on the roads who received, for each day of manual labour, two pounds of bread and five pounds of potatoes per head, worth 6d.¹⁰⁴ No further private relief of this kind seems to have been organized during the rest of the slump in the early 1840's.

The hardship which many linen weavers experienced during the Crimean War has already been discussed.¹⁰⁵ Then from 1855 the coal industry was almost equally depressed, with nearly all the miners working short-time.¹⁰⁶ On February 12, 1855, a Relief Fund was launched at a public meeting in the Court House, on which occasion a sum of £216 was raised. By the end of March the Relief Committee had collected a further £373 from the six Subscription Districts of the town and its environs, £37 from outside benefactors and 50 tons of coal from Messrs. Sturges and Company, coal masters. The biggest subscription came from the major linen firms like: T. Taylor and Sons (£100), Harvey Brothers (£100), Jackson and Hodgetts (£50), Richardson and Company (£40), Joseph Canter (£10), Carter Brothers (£5) and John Cordeux (£5).¹⁰⁷ Up to May 19, when the Committee closed its accounts, more than 590 families were relieved, and "from the strong expressions of gratitude communicated by the recipients to the visitors," the Committee was satisfied that the relief exercise had been "beneficial". Money was also sent to relieve the distressed in the outlying townships. Besides other forms of relief, a soup kitchen was set up and, in fact, the Committee bought a large new container, with a 200-gallon capacity,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p.136; The Northern Star, Mar.7, 1840, p.5.

¹⁰⁵ See above Chapter Two, pp.135ff.

¹⁰⁶ See Ch. Three above, p. 209.

¹⁰⁷ Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, pp.21-22.

for preparing soup. In making this investment, the Committee had foreseen the soup kitchen as a permanent establishment during the winter and other bad months in future years - which it virtually was.¹⁰⁸

One major inherent weakness with the emergency relief measures was the fact that the employers, the majority among the benefactors, were called upon, or found it incumbent upon themselves, to give relief at times when they could least afford it. The crises which caused mass unemployment and poverty also hit their solvency. As such crises deepened and the manufacturers' unsold stocks piled up, their cash flows dried up and some actually went to the wall.¹⁰⁹ This would explain the short durations of the Relief Committees which, in the face of cash shortages, invariably wound up their operations in the midst of the slumps. Aid from people with huge landed interests in Barnsley was a trifle coming in, if at all, mainly because, from their country stately homes, such nobles and gentlemen tended to view the town's ills at a distance. It is curious, for example, that the Lord of the Manor, the one person with such a large stake in the landed, mineral and other economic assets of Barnsley, did not feature among the supporters of the emergency relief funds. For all the zeal and effort of the Relief Committeemen and their supporters, their endeavours could hardly amount to anything more than very temporary stop-gap measures.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.47.

¹⁰⁹ One recalls the ten firms which failed in 1829: See above, p.129

Brian Harrison's appeal to historians for a psychoanalysis of charity - reading between the "manifest" and "latent" functions, as he calls it - is salutary.¹¹⁰ But tangible evidence to support such an approach is, to say the least, very difficult to come by. Nevertheless, it behoves historians in such situations to ask as many relevant questions as they can possibly muster and, where they might fruitfully do so, hazard an enlightened speculation. The philanthropists would have both their contemporaries and posterity believe that their charitable acts were solely motivated by their humanity and, especially, by their Christian duty. It might well have been true but, one suspects, not in all the cases.

Most of the charitable bequests discussed above originated in the 17th century or earlier when 'death-bed repentance' is said to have been one of the influential factors.¹¹¹ In the early 18th century parliamentary legislation changed the situation. By imposing certain restrictions, the Mortmain Act of 1736 accounted for the dramatic drop, henceforward, in charitable bequests. The major provision of the Act was that no "lands, tenements, ... or other hereditaments" were to be given for charitable purposes, unless by deed executed in the presence of two or more witnesses twelve calendar months before the grantor's death. The legislation was intended to arrest the prevalent 'evil' of disinheritance heirs-at-law.¹¹² Perhaps some benefactors might have been motivated not so much by their Christian duty or love as by a possible wish to penalise, for one reason or another, their heirs apparent.

¹¹⁰ Harrison, op.cit., p.357ff.

¹¹¹ See Gilbert Slater, Poverty and the State (1930), p.9.

¹¹² Gareth Jones, History of the Law of Charity, 1532-1827 (Cambridge, 1969), Ch.VII & Appendix J.

We have seen how such bequests landed into the hands of a few prominent personalities who, in spite of their failure to run them properly, insisted on monopolizing these institutions. It is difficult to resist the suspicion that such men were motivated more by their self-seeking desire to promote their own public prestige than by their ingrained compassion for the poor.¹¹³ In trade depressions, masses of helpless and starving weavers and their families must have moved even the most parsimonious among the rich. Moreover, many employers who, as one would expect, had close personal relationships with their men, found it imperative, when they could, to offer help. Members of the clergy were undoubtedly aggrieved by the misery of their faithful. One, therefore, sees a great deal of sincere humanity behind many a relief effort during the trade crises. But, apart from arousing sympathy, such widespread misery represented something more sinister in the minds of those who had a stake in the established social and economic order. It was a breedingground for rebellion among the lower orders, a recipe for the destruction of constituted society. It is reasonable to argue that part of the explanation for such emergency relief efforts as the ones we have been discussing was a concerted attempt to stave off a feared breakdown of the social order.¹¹⁴ By the same token, if charitable relief was used as a carrot to dissuade the labouring masses from rebelling, the denial of it could be, and was, used as a stick against those whose conduct was regarded as detrimental to the social fabric. We are told, for example, that many local 'worthies' decided to discontinue their subscriptions to the unemployed relief fund

¹¹³ See Harrison, op.cit., p.364; Owen op.cit., p.167.

¹¹⁴ See A.W. Coats, "Economic Thought and Poor Law Policy in the 18th century," Economic History Review, Second series, Vol.XII (1960-61), p.49.

late in 1829 when the weavers rioted.¹¹⁵ In 1840 the Northern Star alleged that the Barnsley Wesleyans on the Relief Committee insulted and denied relief to the Chartist members of their Society who applied for aid.¹¹⁶ Perhaps there are many verdicts on charity. One feels that, as well as being a function of compassion and humanity, private charity was, in many varied ways, an instrument for social control.

What emerges from a bird's eye view of poor relief in our period is that it was characteristically inadequate for dealing with the poverty inherent in urban-industrialism. The system, with its roots in a defunct, or nearly defunct, agriculturally-based socio-economic system, was ill-equipped to deal with the poverty arising from structural unemployment, urban overcrowding, glutted labour markets and, worst of all, the periodic slumps.

Our examination of the subject has left us with two glaring weaknesses. First, that we are still in the dark as to the effectiveness of poor relief in the alleviation of poverty. Secondly, that we have not successfully penetrated the world of poverty in the nineteenth century. From the available information, it is impossible for one to embrace the view that the system treated the paupers "sympathetically".¹¹⁷ Statistics are notoriously inadequate. Numbers of those relieved are hardly known for any length of time; there is no way of knowing how many (and one suspects they were quite a few) of those who needed relief and who never actually

¹¹⁵ Hoyle, op.cit., pp.263-264.

¹¹⁶ The Northern Star, April 4, 1840, p.5. Also, Harrison, op.cit., p.371.

¹¹⁷ Bythell, op.cit., p.250.

got it. Even if such statistics were available, they would not tell us anything about the more subtle aspects of pauperism - the psychological trauma implied in forced economic and social dependence. By and large, the poor emerge from the evidence as mute (or muted?) objects who found themselves at the mercy of impersonal forces.

Apart from the briefly successful spurt of opposition to the New Poor Law, the labouring masses exerted no influence on relief policy and practice - except, of course, insofar as some of them were recipients of relief. Nor does there seem to be any evidence of an effort on their part to try to gain such influence. This is the opposite of what happened in the controversial area of sanitary reform and town improvement before 1853 when the town adopted the Public Health Act. There seem to be two plausible explanations. First, that the rate-paying public possessed at least the right to nominate Poor Law officers in vestry elections, a right which, in improvement matters, was not conferred by the local Improvement Act of 1822. Secondly, many workers could, and did, at least in part, opt out of the dualistic relief system by contributing to Benefit Clubs and Friendly Societies. Though the history of such institutions in Barnsley is rather blurred, there is evidence which suggests their considerable importance. During the first half of the 19th century at least forty such societies were formed, some of them, like the Odd Fellows, with as many as eight lodges.¹¹⁸ In 1851 it was estimated that twenty-five lodges of different societies, with a membership of 2,322, paid out £794 a year in sick benefits and £360 in funeral expenses. Another twenty or so lodges with a membership of about 880 did not submit their financial

¹¹⁸ P.R.O., F.S.11/2. It is relevant to point out that there were probably other societies which chose not to register themselves, since registration was ^{not} compulsory by law.

returns.¹¹⁹ On the basis of these figures, membership of such societies constituted about 25 per cent of the town's population and certainly a much larger proportion of the labouring sector of this population - maybe more than half. To labouring Barnsley no such outlet was available, however, from the issues bearing upon sanitation and the general improvement of the town's physical environment. The workingmen's struggle to gain a voice in such matters forms the core of the next chapter.

¹¹⁹ William Ranger, Report on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, and Supply of Water and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Town of Barnsley, (1852), p.60.

CHAPTER FIVE

SANITARY REFORM AND TOWN IMPROVEMENT,

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST MONOPOLY.

Gutters yawned, ash-heaps spread and the mire was deep. There was no gas to dispel the evening gloom, no water but what dropped from the eaves, and no watch to quell the disturbances. A more neglected and forlorn bit of town than the 'piece' could not be got into.

(J.H. Burland on the condition of Wilson's Piece).

I. The Evil as it was Diagnosed:

Our story begins in as late a year as 1852, when the town washed its dirty linen in public by holding an open inquiry into its sanitary condition. It was on this occasion that the manifold problem of sanitation and town improvement was broached. The issues which arose will, within the limits of possibility, be evaluated. Basically, Barnsley was alleged to have suffered decades of sanitary neglect: most of its streets were unpaved; there was no proper sewerage and drainage system; and clean water was extremely short. The worst areas in this respect were those inhabited by the labouring classes. At the inquiry the Improvement Commission, charged by an Act of Parliament with the sanitary improvement of the town, was indicted by the general opinion for neglecting its duty.

In the last two sections we shall examine how the town, over the whole length of our period tried to grapple with the problems of sanitation and town improvement within an institutional framework. Inasmuch as the shaping of the relevant institutions involved opposing factions, this chapter promises to be a study in conflict. The Improvement Commission, the first statutory body to be entrusted with the responsibility of improving the sanitation of the town, was a self-perpetuating oligarchy which was dominated

by rich men. They spent the little resources available in improving mainly the areas in which they themselves lived, neglecting the predominantly working-class areas. The Commission was therefore a major target of the sanitary reformers. In fact, the campaign for improvement assumed a political dimension.

On December 4, 1851 the rate-payers held a public meeting to consider the proposal of the Improvement Commissioners to apply for an amended local Improvement Act which, it was claimed, would remedy the weaknesses of the Act of 1822. The meeting overwhelmingly rejected the Commissioners' proposal and, instead, voted for a counter resolution for the adoption of the Public Health Act of 1848. A Committee of eleven was appointed by the meeting to draw up a petition to the General Board of Health and to collect the requisite number of signatures. The rate-payers' decision was as much a gesture of their disaffection with the Improvement Commissioners as it was an expression of a yearning for better conditions. Four days later the Public Health Act Promotion Committee met and elected William H. Peacock, solicitor, as its secretary. By December 22 the Committee had drawn up the petition and collected 235 signatures, which was more than the 10 per cent of the rate-payers required. The petition was then transmitted to the General Board of Health in London. On January 29, 1852 William Ranger, a Superintending Inspector from the General Board, opened a public inquiry at the Barnsley Court House which lasted three days. Mr. Ranger heard several witnesses who presented him with a great deal of evidence which they had painstakingly gathered over the previous weeks. He himself made an inspection of the major residential areas of the town. The central theme to emerge from the inquiry was the allegedly deplorable conditions under which the working class toiled

and lived, conditions, it was argued, which had played host to disease and death. The complaints about the condition of the town covered a whole range of issues but three major interrelated areas were specifically identified: housing and related facilities, sewerage and drainage, and water supply.¹

It was pointed out that working-class housing, hurriedly, and therefore imperfectly, constructed to accommodate a rapidly rising population, was in a dilapidated state.² William Peacock, the secretary to the Committee for promoting the Public Health Act, presented the inquiry with a detailed statement on 75 dwelling houses and cellars, most of them from Wilson's Piece and its neighbourhood, purporting to be a description of the deplorable condition of the housing of "the poorer classes". Peacock's sample would seem to have been from the worst lot of houses and cellars, selected to make a strong case for the adoption of the Public Health Act. His report made three main points: ventilation was poor or, in some cases, "utterly wanting;" overcrowding was the order of the day; and there was a general atmosphere of filth and decay. Peacock gave the sizes of the rooms and the numbers of the occupants of these houses. The average number of people per house in the sample was five. But some houses were "overflowing with humanity." In Wilkinson's Alley, for example, there was a small chamber, 903 cubic feet, in which there slept a man, his wife and their seven children. In

¹ William Ranger, Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Town of Barnsley in the County of York, (1852), hereafter called 'Ranger Report', pp.5-6, 45-47; P.R.O., M.H.13/16: the petition with signatures, & General Board to Peacock, Dec. 1851, accepting to send Ranger to carry out the inquiry.

² Ranger Report, op.cit., p.38: Ranger's own observation.

an adjacent house, occupied by four residents and their six visitors, Peacock had observed that there was "not a vestige of bedding." And so went on the description of overcrowding and filth in working-class homes and lodging houses, the latter presented as the worst offender in this respect. Some houses were said to be built over privies; others had pigsties or stables in their basements.³ The shortage or, in some cases, the near-absence of privies was another evil. In his evidence Peacock selected 562 houses sheltering a population of 2,618 and served by only 91 privies, which meant an average of one privy for every six houses, or every 29 people. In certain streets the situation was extremely bad. On Thomas Street (Wilson's Piece) one privy, "indescribably filthy and unapproachable," served 87 people in 15 houses. A few yards away in Oxford Square a privy, described as "disgustingly filthy," was used by 96 occupants of 19 cellars. Most of the privies in Peacock's returns were characterised by such graphic descriptions as "very offensive," "worse than could be conceived and utterly unfit to enter," or "bad beyond description, with a broken seat and without a door."⁴ Ranger was told that the use of privies was almost unknown among the children who, in conversation with each other, made use of the expression 'going to the ground'.⁵ Many witnesses singled out for special description the underground weaving shops which were so ill-ventilated that they were always excessively damp. Moreover, because the system of drainage was so poor, sometimes water from the streets found its way into the shops and

³ Ibid., pp.62-65: Peacock's statement.

⁴ Ibid., pp.68-70: Peacock's returns would have given a better picture if they were based on an exhaustive sample of one or two districts instead of a selection of the worst streets and alleys in the different districts of the town.

⁵ Ibid., p.43.

"the overflowing contents of the adjoining soil pits (were) discharged into the shops, the occupants of which (were) obliged to bale them out two or three times a day."⁶

The existing arrangements for scavenging, sewerage and drainage, in living quarters and on the streets, especially in the areas occupied by the poor, came under severe criticism from clergymen, manufacturers and workingmen who appeared as witnesses. Wilson's Piece and its neighbourhood, described as "the seat of epidemic diseases," was the worst area, in spite of its being situated on sloping ground. Houses were without drains; there was no underground sewerage; the little surface drainage there existed was "of the most imperfect kind;" and, as a result, house refuse of every kind was found on the streets. One resident complained that his premises were "continually flooded." Water ran into his cellar and damaged his goods, and he always had to find his way through heaps of refuse which lay strewn on the surface of the street.⁷ The existing sewerage system consisted of four sewers which served only a small portion of the town, especially in the north. Since the Improvement Act of 1822 excluded the Commissioners from 'undicated' (or unadopted) streets, they could not compel owners of property in such areas to lay down either main sewers or house drains. The condition of the weaving shops was quoted as the major illustration of the miserable state of the sewerage and drainage systems:

In Top fold a drain has become stopped up, and all the refuse water has become stagnant, except what finds its way into the weavers' shops. In one of them, a six-loomed shop, in which a man was at work, the water was standing nearly two feet deep. This man stated that he had baled out 47½ gallons.
.....

⁶ Ibid., p.19.

⁷ Ibid., pp.30-32, 56-58.

In Union Street the water often runs into one of the weaving shops for want of a sough to carry it away. In Thomas Street the liquid contents of the privy drains into one of the shops, from which the occupants have to bale it out. The smell is most offensive, especially when the shop has been shut up for a short time. 8

That the weavers were constantly exposed to the "deleterious effects of an unhealthy atmosphere", the Rev. Cook argued, was demonstrated by the fact that they looked "worn-out, emaciated old men by the time they were 50 years of age."⁹

Part of the explanation for the lack of efficient sewerage and drainage was found in the shortage of water supply. The Barnsley Waterworks Company, formed in 1837, controlled the supply of water to the town, but its services covered only 1,197 houses out of a total 2,937. Those areas of the town, including the whole of Wilson's Piece, which did not receive pipe water from the private Company relied on 30 or so water carriers who got the water from public wells, especially the Shaw-well and the Oak-well. Joseph Parkinson, owner of many weavers' cottages, complained that the water Company had turned down his application to supply them with water. In reply William Peckett, the manager of the waterworks Company, told the inquiry that the water rates "from the poorer class of houses were so very small that they would not pay for the trouble of collecting them." The Company, he said, had decided not to expand their services unless they were sure of a reasonable return on their investment. Earlier in 1848 the trustees of the Shaw Lands Charity had enclosed the Shaw-well head and had erected pumps there, thus stopping the water from this source flowing into town where stone cisterns had been placed for its reception and pumps set up for the use

⁸ Ibid., p.20.

⁹ Ibid., p.57.

of the inhabitants. The trustees enclosed the well to put a stop to the fouling of the water which, allegedly, had continually taken place when the well remained open. Poorer members of the public who could not afford to pay the water-carriers had to walk as much as 400 yards or more to get a canful of water. The shortage of water, it was argued, not only militated against efficient sewerage, drainage and street cleansing but fostered "uncleanly and careless habits", and therefore caused disease, amongst the working population.¹⁰

An already familiar argument was reiterated by many witnesses, not least the manufacturers, that the insanitary environment in which the poor lived gave rise to the prevalence of disease among them. As a result, they said, many working hours were lost and the workingman's earnings suffered - a factor which adversely affected the trade of the town and increased expenditure on poor relief.¹¹ But both in the evidence submitted by some of the witnesses and in Mr. Ranger's own remarks the causal relationship between the insanitary conditions and disease was expressed in terms of the prevailing 'miasmatic' or 'pythogenic' theory of disease, that is, the belief that many diseases, especially those of an epidemic nature, resulted from the victims' inhaling of air from an 'impure' or 'epidemic' atmosphere.¹² The word smell, qualified by such adjectives as 'awful', 'foul', 'offensive', or 'insufferable', dominated the descriptions of the different allegedly insanitary streets

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.23-30, 42-43, 73-78.

¹¹ Ibid., p.20: Testimony of C.Harvey, H.Richardson & T. Rhodehouse. See also E.Chadwick, Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Populations of Great Britain, (1842), p.369.

¹² See Chadwick, op.cit., pp.4,369. S.E.Finer, The Life and Times of Edwin Chadwick, (1952) pp.297-298; R.A.Lewis, Edwin Chadwick and the Public Health Movement, 1832-1854, (1952), E.C.Midwinter, Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860 (1969), p.66. The promulgator of the miasmatic theory was Dr.Southwood Smith, an original member of the General Board of Health. For his views, first enunciated in 1825, see his essay in Ruth Hodgkinson (ed.), Public Health in the Victorian Age, Vol.II (1973) pp.134-167.

and houses. The Superintending Inspector believed that in Barnsley "the accumulation of large quantities of excrementitious matter in the crowded courts and streets occupied by the poor, and therefore in the immediate neighbourhood of their ill-ventilated and densely populated dwellings, must prove most deleterious to the health and good physical condition of the people, inasmuch as every day of their lives they are inhaling an atmosphere poisoned by gases of the most noxious kind".¹³ In his returns William Peacock mentioned a room in Gas-nook tenanted by a widow:

This room is built over a stable, and as the boarded floor is very thin and decayed, the smell is very offensive. The poor woman is in very bad health. 14

The weaving shops, receptacles of liquid refuse from privies, open gutters, and stables, contained poisoned gases and so "a very large proportion of the weaving population who work in their own shops are living in and breathing the atmosphere of a cesspool." No wonder, many witnesses believed, the weavers were so vulnerable to disease.¹⁵

The Barnsley average annual death-rate for the years 1849-51 was about 28 per thousand,¹⁶ a death-rate which, according to the Public Health Act of 1848, would have been enough reason for the General Board of Health to initiate steps for the adoption of the Act in Barnsley, even without the rate-payers' petition.¹⁷ In fact the figure compared unfavourably with

¹³ Ranger Report, op.cit., p.18.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.17.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.19-22.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.12.

¹⁷ Although the General Board had power to initiate such steps if the death-rate exceeded 23 per thousand, the Board, it is said, used such power sparingly: See Finer, op.cit., p.431.

the 23 per thousand for the whole of England and Wales.¹⁸ By comparing Barnsley with some other West Riding towns, Ranger concluded that the proportion of deaths attributable to 'zymotic' diseases in Barnsley was much higher. For the years 1849-51 zymotic diseases in Barnsley accounted for about 35 per cent of the total deaths - compared to 28 per cent in Halifax, 23½ per cent in Dewsbury and 20½ per cent in Wakefield.¹⁹ In a period when the 'pythogenic' theory of disease held sway, zymotic diseases meant all contagious diseases contracted, not through bacterial infections, but rather through an epidemic atmosphere, an atmosphere that was polluted by insanitary conditions. The most common diseases under this class included the different 'fevers', especially small-pox, measles, typhus, whooping cough, diarrhoea, dysentery and cholera. Medical opinion was not monolithic on this matter and controversy was not wanting. But in the mainstream of sanitary reform and the medical world generally there was an inability to distinguish between the diseases directly associated with bad sanitation, especially the water-borne diseases like dysentery and cholera which affected the digestive system, and other diseases like small-pox, measles or tuberculosis which, in the main, were attributable to poor living conditions generally.²⁰

Michael Thomas Sadler, who had been practising medicine in Barnsley for 28 years, told Ranger's inquiry that the town was "comparatively exempt from fevers of an epidemic nature except those usual to infancy." (He meant mainly whooping cough, diarrhoea, small-pox, measles and diphtheria). He attributed

¹⁸ P.P.1852-53 (1665) XL: Fourteenth Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages for England and Wales, p.xv.

¹⁹ Ranger Report, p.13. Ranger's conclusion, however, is misleadingly inaccurate because the comparison for the different towns is not over the same number of years.

²⁰ See C.A. Wolland, "Political & Social Influences in the Application of Public Health Policy, 1841-1851, A Comparative study of Birmingham and Wolverhampton," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Warwick, 1973), pp.7ff.

this to what he termed the favourable situation of the town: that the town was built on sandstone formation and that most of the streets, including the whole of notorious Wilson's Piece, were on sloping ground and therefore relatively free from pools of stagnant water. There were, of course, exceptions of undrained "wet lodges". Sadler reported that most of the diseases among the working class were those due to conditions of poverty: "debility and want of physical energy." This could have meant anything from malnutrition to undiagnosable diseases. He singled out tuberculosis as the greatest single cause of death.²¹

The returns of the Superintendent Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for the Barnsley District in 1839 would seem to confirm some of Sadler's observations. Among the 43 different causes of the 356 deaths in 1839 measles and tuberculosis stood out as the major causes, accounting for more than a third of the deaths. Measles claimed 85 victims, and tuberculosis 46. Children were the most vulnerable to measles; 90 per cent of the victims were under five years of age. Tuberculosis, a disease said to be common among the hand-loom weavers, mainly owing to their damp and ill-ventilated weaving shops providing a culture medium for the tubercle bacilli, was more widespread in the different age-groups.²² Between 1849 and 1851 tuberculosis accounted for an average of 17 per cent of the deaths per year. The figure is quite high if compared with the West Riding average of 10 per cent, and the national (England and Wales) average of 12 per cent.²³ But one must qualify these

²¹ Ranger Report, op.cit., p.59: original emphasis.

²² P.P.1842 (381) XVI: Royal Commission on the Employment of Children (mines); Appendix to the 1st Report, Pt.I: Sub-Commissioners' Report & Evidence, hereafter, Children Employment Commission: pp.216-217.

²³ Compiled from: Ranger Report, op.cit., p.58. P.P.1851 (1416), XXII; P.P.1852 (1520), XVIII; P.P.1852-53 (1665) XL: Twelfth, Thirteenth & Fourteenth (respectively) Annual Reports of the Registrar General of Births Deaths and Marriages for England and Wales, pp.253, 156 & 126, respectively.

figures with the fact that because tuberculosis was very difficult to diagnose, it was likely to have been confused with other chest diseases, for example pneumoconiosis, a coal miners' disease.

The available figures show a very high rate of infant mortality. In 1839, for example, 55 per cent of the deaths occurred among infants of less than two years of age.²⁴ The age classification for the 1849-51 figures does not suit our purpose in this respect but the figures would indicate a high infant mortality rate as well - though there appears to have been an improvement on the 1839 situation. Over these three years an average of 59 per cent of the deaths per year occurred among children of less than fifteen years of age. This compared very unfavourably with the England and Wales average of 46 per cent over the same period.²⁵

It is difficult for us to find our way through the welter of contemporary debate on sanitation and public health, mainly for two reasons. First, the information presented to us by the sanitary reformers, intended as it was to make a strong case for reform, is highly slanted. In this connection the Ranger Report on Barnsley, which sold widely locally, was as much a report on the sanitary condition of the town as it was an appeal to Barnsley public opinion to support the campaign for the adoption of the Public Health Act.²⁶ Secondly, much of the data, especially that concerning the classification of diseases, is rendered less reliable by the low standards of medical science. One finds it ludicrous, for example, that the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages classified syphilis, a largely sexually

²⁴ Children's Employment Commission (1842), loc.cit.

²⁵ Ranger Report, loc.cit.; Twelfth, Thirteenth & Fourteenth Annual Reports of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages for England and Wales, op.cit., pp.212-213, 110-111 & 98-99, respectively.

²⁶ See Finer, op.cit., p.432; Midwinter, op.cit., p.76.

transmitted disease, along with measles, cholera and dysentery, as a 'zymotic' disease! Nevertheless, this information, the only one available, is not without value. On the whole, it would seem that the town's rates of morbidity and mortality were more attributable to the poverty inherent in urban-industrialism generally, especially that obtaining under the conditions of deprivation imposed by the ailing linen trade, than to bad sanitation per se. One thinks of the effects of undernourishment, cold, overwork, overcrowding and general ignorance of hygiene.

Although one should be careful not to minimize the effects of the appalling sanitary conditions, one is inclined to agree with the surgeon Michael Thomas Sadler when he referred to "the favourable situation" of the town, most of it built on sloping ground. One shudders to imagine what the sanitary condition of Wilson's Piece would have been were it located in the Dearne valley - like the sort of situation that obtained in Leeds, for example, where the working-class area (including the "infamous" Boot and Shoe Yard) was situated in that part of the town which had previously been meadows and marshes along the banks of the River Aire and its tributaries.²⁷ The relatively low death rate in Barnsley due to the outbreaks of cholera in 1831-32 and 1849 would seem to bear this out. In 1831-32 only about 0.4 per cent of the population died of cholera, compared to nearly 1.0 per cent in Leeds.²⁸ In 1849 the death rate was even lower - about 25 persons constituting 0.2 per cent of the population. Few of the victims lived in Wilson's Piece; in fact most of them lived in the low lying areas around May Day Green, near the present market centre.²⁹ But the argument of the sanitary

²⁷ See J.F.C.Harrison, Learning and Living, 1790-1960 (1963 ed.), pp.8-11.

²⁸ See Edmund W. Gilbert, British Pioneers in Geography (Newton Abbot, 1972), E.Ashworth Underwood, "The History of the 1832 Cholera Epidemic in Yorkshire," Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, Vol.XXVIII, (1935), pp.604.

²⁹ Eli Hoyle, "History of Barnsley to 1850" (n.d., B.R.L.), p.363; John H. Burland, "Annals of Barnsley" (4 Vols., MSS., B.R.L.), Vol.II, pp.9,298,300.

reformers, that bad sanitation accounted for the bulk of the morbidity and mortality among the poor, seems to have carried the day.

The whole tone of the Report on Barnsley, including the minutes of evidence, attributed the bad sanitary conditions more to the deficiency in the existing administrative apparatus than to the alleged unclean habits of the poor classes.³⁰ In this connection, the Improvement Commission, set up in 1822, came in for criticism. In fact, the inquiry itself was a culmination of an old, albeit intermittent, campaign against this institution. The controversial career of this body of Commissioners is our next subject.

II. The Controversial Improvement Commissioners:

We have been told of "an almost continual stream" of local Improvement Acts from the mid-18th century.³¹ The Act "for lighting, paving, cleansing, watching, and improving the Town of Barnsley," generally referred to as the Improvement Act, received royal assent on 15 May 1822. The Act appointed 69 Commissioners (popularly known as Police Commissioners) who were vested with the powers for the implementation of the Act. The jurisdiction of the Act was limited to the area within a radius of 1,200 yards of a building demolished in 1820, known as the Moot Hall, situated near the present Town Hall. The remaining 1,450 acres of the township, at this time consisting mainly of arable, pasture and open land, were left out. Under the Act, the

³⁰ See Midwinter, op.cit., pp.66-67; M.W.Flinn, Introduction to Edwin Chadwick, The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain (edited by M.W.Flinn, Edinburgh, 1965), pp.29ff.

³¹ See Sidney & Beatrice Webb, English Local Government, Vol.4, Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes, (1963 ed.), p.242. B.Keith-Lucas, "Some Influences Affecting the Development of Sanitary Legislation in England," Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol.VI, (1953-54), pp.293-296.

Commissioners were authorized to levy rates on rateable property in the following manner: 1) a 'Paving Rate' of up to 1s. 3d. in the Pound to finance the paving, flagging, and repairing of public streets and highways. 2) a 'Lighting and Watching Rate' of up to 1s. in the Pound to defray the expenses for lighting the streets and other public places, and for employing watchmen for the prevention of fires, public nuisances and breaches of the peace. 3) a 'Public Improvement Rate' not exceeding 6d. in the Pound to be expended in purchasing buildings and other property for the purpose of carrying out such general improvements as the widening of the streets, the construction of drainage or the erection of slaughterhouses.³²

The promoting of the Act cost the town a sum of £2,022. There seem to be two main reasons why the town's 'principal inhabitants' and their allies promoted this Act when they did. First, the previous decade had seen a tremendous population increase of more than 5 per cent per year - the fastest in the whole century.³³ The increase implied pressure mainly on housing, street space, town cleanliness and public health. There arose, therefore, need for a regulatory machinery in these matters. Secondly, in 1820 the town's radicals had staged what is popularly known as the Grange Moor Insurrection, an event which forms the core of a forthcoming chapter,³⁴ and which alarmed the 'principal inhabitants'. The lighting and watching of the town at night was probably seen as a necessary measure in preventing a recurrence of similar disturbances in the future. No wonder then that one of the first steps the Commissioners took was to appoint Francis Batty, a parish constable of some long standing, as their "informer" charged with "laying informations against persons discovered by him gathering within the limits of the Act." He was later confirmed as head of the night watch.³⁵

³² The Act, 3 Geo.IV, Cap.25, is a long and detailed document consisting of 143 clauses. The summary in this paragraph constitutes its salient points.

³³ See above, Ch. One, Section IV.

³⁴ Infra, Chapter Eight.

³⁵ "Proceedings of the Commissioners of the Barnsley Improvement Act," hereafter, "Commissioners' Minute Book" (2 Vols. MS, B.R.L.), Vol.I, p.15 on the meeting of July 2, 1822.

In fact a major step in this direction had been taken in 1821 when an Act of Parliament was obtained for the formation of the Barnsley Gas Light Company.³⁶ The lighting of the public streets was anticipated as one of the Company's major functions by its promoters. Of the 71 original shareholders in the Gas company, 29 were later appointed Commissioners under the Improvement Act.³⁷

The one major feature of the Improvement Act which rendered it potentially controversial was that the Commissioners were free from any control, or indeed influence, by the rate-payers and the members of the Barnsley public at large. The first body of Commissioners were appointed by the Act itself and future replacements of those who died or who became disqualified were co-opted by the existing Commissioners, subject to their confirmation by the Justices at the Quarter Sessions. The Commissioners had no obligation to hold open meetings or to subject their accounts to public scrutiny. To the predominant majority of the inhabitants the property qualifications for becoming a Commissioner were quite prohibitive. One had, in his own right or that of his wife, to be in possession of either freehold or leasehold property of the clear annual value of £100, or, alternatively, have a personal estate of £1,000.³⁸ Table 5.1 listing the occupations, or otherwise the social status, of the original 69 Commissioners clearly shows that only those in the upper echelons of the community could gain access to the Commission. In fact, thirteen of these first Commissioners were non-resident land-owning nobles and gentlemen, among whom were the Duke of Leeds, Lord of the Manor; Viscount Milton, later Earl Fitzwilliam, of the palatial Wentworth House;

³⁶

1 & 2 Geo.IV. Cap.75, "An Act for Lighting the Town of Barnsley, in the West Riding of the County of York, with Gas."

³⁷

Analysis of the names in both 1 & 2 Geo.IV Cap.75 and 3 Geo.IV Cap.25.

³⁸

3 Geo IV Cap.25 Section 2. See also the Webbs, op.cit., p.244.

Table 5.1: Social composition of the Improvement Commission, 1822 & 1852:

Category	Number Percentage 1822		Number Percentage 1852	
1.Landowners	16	23%	3	6%
2.Linen Manufacturers	23	33%	21	39%
3.Coal Masters	1	2%	4	7%
4.Other Industrial	2	3%	4	7%
5.Merchants & Traders	11	16%	10	19%
6.Professionals	13	19%	6	11%
7.Unknown	3	4%	6	11%
Totals	69	100%	54	100%

Sources: (1) 3 Geo IV. Cap.25; (2) "Sixty Years of Local Government in Barnsley" in J. Wilkinson, Barnsley Police Commissioners, Board of Health, Corporation (MS & cuttings, B.R.L.), n.p. (3) Edward Baines, History, Directory & Gazetteer of the County of York, Vol.I, West Riding (Leeds, 1822), pp.134-139. (4) The Ranger Report (1852), op.cit., p.51.

J.A. Stuart Wortley, later Lord Wharncliffe of Wortley Hall near Sheffield; F.T.W.V. Wentworth of Wentworth Hall, Lord of the Manor of Worsborough; and Walter Spencer Stanhope, magistrate and proprietor of the extensive Cannon Hall estate.³⁹ An analysis of the same table of the Improvement Commission thirty years later in 1852 shows a considerable shift in membership from the landowning aristocracy and gentry in favour of the industrial bourgeoisie.

³⁹ Ibid., Section 1; "Sixty Years of Local Government in Barnsley," in Joseph Wilkinson, Barnsley Police Commissioners, Board of Health, Corporation, (MS. & cuttings, B.R.L.), n.p.

The Commissioners' career was characterized, at best, by inertia and, at worst, by a conspicuous absence of a serious sense of duty. The little action they took in the course of their duty was utterly devoid of enthusiasm or imagination. In most of their meetings their decisions rarely went beyond such routine functions as the assessing and collecting of rates, the approval of routine expenditure, especially on street lighting, or the appointment of functionaries under the 1822 Act. Attendance at their meetings was extremely poor. From 1822, when they started, to 1853, when they were disbanded, more than a third of their meetings were inquorate - the quorum being only five Commissioners. In fact, at least half of them, including all the non-resident nobles and gentlemen, never attended a single meeting.⁴⁰ Of the 86 meetings called in the years 1849-51 only 66 of them were quorate, the average attendance at each meeting being eight persons.⁴¹ By this time there were 54 Commissioners on the list, 22 of whom never participated in the Commission's business at all.⁴² A careful scrutiny of the Improvement Commission's minute book startlingly reveals that over most of the Commission's life, about ten individuals, men with either great dedication or a strong taste for public affairs, dominated its activities.⁴³

⁴⁰ Commissioners' Minute Book, op.cit., Vols. 1 & 2.

⁴¹ Ranger Report, op.cit., p.54.

⁴² Ibid., p.51. Non-attendance at Commissioners' meetings seems to have been a universal problem; see the Webbs, op.cit., p.251 on Plymouth and p.258 on Manchester.

⁴³ The most active Commissioners, whose attendance at meetings was fairly regular, were the Tory Joseph Beckett (Chairman from 1822 to the end of the 1830's), W.C. Mence (who, though himself a Commissioner, acted as Clerk to the Commissioners), William Shepherd, William Hopwood, George Travis, William Peckett, William Haxworth, John Greenwood, William Clarke, Joseph Hall and Joseph Fox: Commissioners' Minute Book Vols. 1 & 2. The first five were among the substantial housing property owners in the town: See Table 1.12 above.

Few of the Commissioners' measures could be described as important. In July 1822 the Commissioners agreed with the Gas Company for the latter to provide facilities for the lighting of the public streets at night.⁴⁴ In the same month they decided to buy the Duke of Leeds' manorial rights concerning markets and fairs in the belief that such an acquisition would not only enable them to improve the market and fair facilities but, more importantly, yield a substantial revenue from tolls and rents, money which would go to finance their town improvement projects.⁴⁵ But, for reasons unknown, they did not seek the Duke's acceptance of the transfer of the manorial rights until 1828.⁴⁶ Even then, the whole idea was eventually dropped, and the Lord of the Manor was left to let the market rights to individuals. Perhaps the Commissioners' boldest decision in the early period of their career was that taken in October 1822 for the construction of two public sewers in the northern half of the town.⁴⁷ Although the original intention was to make deep underground sewers, what was first constructed was a pair of surface drains which at a later time were laid about 8 feet deep.⁴⁸ Two more sewers, $11\frac{1}{2}$ feet below the surface, were added to the system in the latter half of 1851 and benefited mainly the residents of the Ecclesiastical District of St. George's, an area that contained a fairly large proportion of the working class.⁴⁹ But Wilson's Piece, and much of the working-class stronghold around it, was served by no sewerage of any description. None of the streets in this district were adopted by the Commissioners for

⁴⁴ Commissioners' Minute Book, Vol.I, p.16.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.14.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.229.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.41.

⁴⁸ Ranger Report, op.cit., p.31.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.57.

paving and cleansing. Between 1822 and 1851 the Commissioners purchased property to the value of £5,751 for the purpose of carrying out such improvements as street widening or sewerage construction.⁵⁰ They also played an important part in reconciling the conflicting interests involved in the building of railways in the 1840's.⁵¹ Apart from these measures, the Commissioners did very little, which was why they were so controversial.

The first signs of discontent with the Commissioners' performance appeared in 1835. Early in the year a group of rate-payers made a survey of the town and discovered that 30 streets, lanes and by-roads, occupied by 650 houses, enjoyed no lighting service at night, in spite of the fact that the residents were paying the full lighting and watching rate. They expressed their intention, in the press, of calling a public meeting to discuss the issue.⁵² The development of events from this time is not clear but it seems that the campaign went on, for in July of the following year a subscription was initiated with the intention of raising money to employ counsel who would work for the abolition of the paving, lighting and improvement rates. Within a matter of days 150 people had put their signatures to the subscription list.⁵³ In 1837 the rate-payers' struggle against the Improvement Commissioners was stepped up.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.55.

⁵¹ Commissioners' Minute Book, Vol.I: minutes of the meetings of Jan.23, 1846 and Jan.8, 1847.

⁵² The Leeds Times, Mar. 28, 1835, p.2.

⁵³ Ibid., July 16, 1836, p.4.

When Feargus O'Connor met the members of the local Radical Association on January 13, 1837, they told him of their grievances against the Improvement Commissioners. The following morning O'Connor addressed a large crowd in the Market Place and encouraged them to resist the gross injustices perpetrated upon them by the Commissioners.⁵⁴ Three days after his departure, a number of radicals met at the home of Peter Hoey, the weavers' leader, to discuss the Commissioners' "abuses of public money." It was alleged that the Commissioners implemented the Act in their favour. John Cordeux, a Commissioner, had expanded his warehouse six years earlier but had hitherto not paid the full rates. Joseph Speight, another Commissioner, had occupied a shop for three years without paying any rate, "while all the poor people were compelled to pay or have their effects sold in default." Some people charged the Commissioners with having carried out, three years previously, a rate reassessment which was weighted against cottage houses and in favour of better quality houses occupied by the rich. Joseph Lingard, the local radical newsagent, claimed that whereas, as a result of the rate reassessment, he had to pay 15 per cent more rates, Godfrey Mason, a Commissioner who occupied a house opposite his own, paid substantially reduced rates. The meeting expressed the opinion that the Commissioners had neglected their duty regarding lighting, watching, paving and cleansing the streets. They called for a parliamentary inquiry into the Commissioners' conduct. They resolved also to invite Edward Baines, M.P. for Leeds, to see the condition of the town's streets "in order that he may be enabled to lay our grievances before the House of Commons."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid., Jan.21, 1837, p.5.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

When Baines arrived in the town on January 31, he was met not just by the members of the Radical Association but by a cross-section of the whole community. At the public meeting chaired by Joseph Lingard, Baines was told that the Improvement Commissioners were nothing more than a self-perpetuating clique which was responsible to no one. They did only what suited their convenience, which was why 50 out of 56 lamps lighted in the town's streets were adjoining either the Commissioners' residences or their property. Working-class areas, especially Wilson's Piece and Pease Hills (around St. George's Church), were completely neglected; streets there were neither lighted, paved nor repaired. The meeting called for an amended local Act which would enable the rate-payers to elect the Commissioners.⁵⁶ The Commissioners, who had prudently stayed away from the meeting, sent their Clerk, W.C. Mence, to defend their record. Mence, who saw Baines privately after the meeting, claimed that because the amount of rates the Commissioners could collect was limited by the Act, they had little money at their disposal for improvement purposes. Moreover, he argued, most of the areas cited as illustrative of the Commissioners' neglect were private property which could not be improved without the owners' consent.⁵⁷ What Mence did not say was that of the ten most prominent owners of slum property in Wilson's Piece, including himself, eight were Improvement Commissioners.⁵⁸ The battle between the Commissioners and the militant rate-payers then shifted to the press, with William Mence, the Commissioners' Clerk, on one side, and Joseph Crabtree, the radical hand-loom weaver, on the other, as the leading combatants. Crabtree charged the Commissioners with misappropriation of funds, and Mence himself with power mongering and graft. He (Mence) acted as Clerk to almost every institution in the town and, though he owned about 120 houses, paid amazingly little in rates.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ The Leeds Intelligencer, Feb. 4, 1837, p. 3. The Leeds Mercury, Feb. 4, 1837, p. 5. John Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," (MS. B.R.L.), Vol. I, p. 64.

⁵⁷ The Leeds Mercury, Feb. 4, 1837, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Barnsley Lighting & Watching Rate books, 1837 onwards (MSS, B.R.L.).

⁵⁹ The Leeds Intelligencer, Feb. 18, 1837, p. 5. The Leeds Times, Feb. 25, 1837, p. 5 April 22, 1837, p. 8.

In April 1837 the rate-payers' struggle was climaxed by a court drama. On February 19 Joseph Lingard, a leading radical, appeared before the magistrates in the overcrowded Barnsley Court House charged with refusing to pay the rates under the Improvement Act:

Cooke (J.P.) : Will you have the kindness to state to the bench why you refuse to pay?

Lingard: Because the street in which I live is neither lighted, watched nor improved. If any of you gentlemen of the bench were residents in the street, it would be better attended to, but as it is the inhabitants of that street are neglected and their complaints treated with contempt, and if they apply to the Commissioners of Police, they are insulted. There runs a gutter within nine inches of the threshold of my door; in wet weather it is almost impossible for any person to get to my house, except by walking shoe-top deep in mud and water.

Cooke: I am very sorry but such are the provisions of the Act, that unless you pay, the bench will be under the necessity of granting a distress warrant.

Lingard: This is really very hard.

Cooke: So it is but you must pay.

Lingard: Very well, I will pay but the seat of the Commissioners shall not be so easy as it has been.

Mr. Mence's Clerk: Do as you like; we don't care for you.

Lingard: We'll make you.⁶⁰

Refusal to pay rates as a gesture of protest against the Commissioners' failure to carry out their duties properly would seem to have been fairly widespread at this time.⁶¹

The popular opposition, in April 1837, to the proposed Bill for setting up the Barnsley Waterworks Company could also be seen in the context of the

⁶⁰ The Leeds Times, April 22, 1837, p.5.

⁶¹ See Burland, loc.cit.

struggle against the fact that a few men monopolized the town's essential services. After all, a third of those named in the Bill as prospective proprietors of the Waterworks were also Improvement Commissioners.⁶²

The Water Bill had proposed to reserve all the springs and wells in Barnsley and its neighbourhood for the use of the private Waterworks Company. The water supplied by the Company would cost twice as much as that supplied by the water-carriers. When the Bill was published, it provoked a storm of protest not only from workingmen but also from property owners and coal masters. On April 20 a public meeting was called to protest against the Bill. The protesters invoked the Enclosure Act of 1777 which had reserved certain springs and wells for public use. At the meeting William Mence, the chief architect of the Bill, defended it and argued that, since its promoters were the "benefactors" of the people, it was in everybody's interest that the Bill should become law. In reply, Joseph Crabtree dismissed Mence's arguments as a piece of unadulterated nonsense:

You understand that the promoters of the Bill were the promoters of the Police (Improvement) Bill of which the inhabitants of this town have so long complained. ... I am acquainted with the twistings and insinuations of the faction which has so long lived upon the hard toil of the people of Barnsley, and I am determined, whilst I have life, they shall be gulled no longer by the base hypocrisies(sic) who call themselves the benefactors of the people. ⁶³

The promoters of the Water Bill were overwhelmed by the opposition. The wells and springs reserved by the Enclosure Act of 1777 were specifically preserved by the final Act which named the River Dearne as the only source of the Company's water supply.⁶⁴

⁶² Analysis of list of Improvement Commissioners and names of original proprietors of the Waterworks named in the Waterworks Act.

⁶³ The Leeds Times, April 22, 1837, p.8.

⁶⁴ 1 Vict. Cap.82: "An Act for better supplying with water the Town and Neighbourhood of Barnsley in the County of York," Article 40.

The thrust of the campaign against the Improvement Commission moved on. On January 2, 1838 the rate-payers held a public meeting where they reiterated their dissatisfaction with the dirty state of the town and the oligarchic structure of the Commission. They appointed a fourteen-man Committee to remonstrate with the Commissioners on these issues. The meeting also empowered its committee to look into the practical means of achieving a Charter of Incorporation for the town. Although the committee was heavily manned by manufacturers and businessmen, it included Vallance, Hoey and Crabtree, three hand-loom weavers who were in the vanguard of the Chartist movement.⁶⁵ On January 11 the rate-payers' Committee presented to a meeting of the Commissioners a memorial which made six major complaints about the status quo:

(1) The appointment of Commissioners independently of the rate-paying public was "wrong in principle." (2) Why were not the Commissioners' accounts submitted to the rate-payers' meetings as was the case with other parochial affairs? (3) The property qualification for Commissioners was also "wrong in principle; the only qualification ought to have been ownership or occupancy of rateable property. (4) The rate-payers demanded access to the Commissioners' meetings which hitherto had remained closed. (5) They also wanted to receive advance notice of the Commissioners' intention to assess rateable property; and (6) The clauses in the Act which rendered it impossible for the Commissioners to raise as much money as they required for the purpose of carrying out their duties ought to be repealed. The rate-payers, the memorialists stated, were not opposed to an increase in the rates, provided the money went to finance the improvement of the town. The memorial called upon the Commissioners to co-operate with the rate-payers in obtaining an amended local Act or, preferably, in procuring a Charter of Incorporation.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ The Northern Star, Jan.6, 1838, p.5.

⁶⁶ Commissioners' Minute Book, Vol.I, pp.287-288.

The confident Commissioners rejected all but one of the points made in the rate-payers' petition. They agreed to publish their annual accounts but to append to the balance sheet a list of rate defaulters. As to the power of appointing the Commissioners, they found it neither "expedient" nor "desirable" that it should be transferred from themselves and the magistrates to the rate-payers. The Commissioners found the 1822 Act to be perfectly adequate and refused to be involved in any attempts to obtain amendments to it. They told the delegation that the rate-payers were free "to act as they pleased" in their quest for a Charter of Incorporation.⁶⁷ Three days later, when the rate-payers' Committee reported to the general meeting about its encounter with the Commissioners, the enraged rate-payers decided to petition Parliament for a redress of their grievances.⁶⁸ From this point the rate-payers' protest seems to have petered out.

The reasons why this first phase of the anti-Improvement Commission campaign rose and fell when it did are not difficult to find. The early 1830's, which saw the Reform Bill agitation and the passing of the Bill into law, was not a favourable period for institutions run by (to use the Webbs' phraseology) "self-elected and self-renewing little cliques of 'principal inhabitants'".⁶⁹ From 1820, we are told, more and more of the local Improvement Commissions were being set up on the so-called 'elective principle'.⁷⁰ Thus in Manchester the monopolistic position of the Improvement Commissioners was challenged, not least, by radical politicians.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.288-299.

⁶⁸ The Northern Star, Jan.20, 1838, p.5.

⁶⁹ Webbs, op.cit., p.245.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.244.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp.264ff.

During the inquiries of the Royal Commission on Municipal Corporations (1833-35) reformers fervently argued in favour of municipal authorities elected by a wider constituency which would supercede the ones into which members were co-opted by those in office.⁷² The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 created bodies which were answerable to the rate-paying public, and thus reinforced the 'elective principle'.⁷³ In many boroughs the functions of the Improvement Commissions were taken over by the reformed corporations.⁷⁴ Such 'democratic' municipalities became the envy of townships like Barnsley in which improvement and policing functions remained under the monopoly of the oligarchic Improvement Commissions. No wonder then that the campaign for a Charter of Incorporation was one of the major planks of the Barnsley municipal reformers.⁷⁵

At one important level the agitation against the Improvement Commissioners in Barnsley, which in no small measure owed its vigour and resolve to the role of working-class radicals, can be seen as an extension of contemporary working-class protest, active on many fronts: the campaign against 'taxes on knowledge', the anti-Poor Law agitation and, above all, the struggle for a reformed Parliament.⁷⁶ The undemocratic character of the Improvement Commission provided a meeting point for the working-class radicals, led by Crabtree, Hoey and Vallance, and frustrated small businessmen and manufacturers whose ambition to participate in the running of an institution which consumed their rates was thwarted by the 'monopolistic faction'. But this marriage of convenience between middle-class and working-class 'radicalism' was to prove

⁷² E.P.Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth Century Urban Government, (1973), p.309.

⁷³ Ibid., p.310.

⁷⁴ Webbs, Statutory Authorities, op.cit., pp.345-346.

⁷⁵ See above, p. 284.

⁷⁶ See Chapter Nine, Section II.

short-lived owing, I would argue, to the rising tide of Chartism. As the town's Chartist activities assumed a popular dimension, alarm spread among the town's middle class who increasingly found working-class radicals to be strange allies in the battle with the Improvement Commissioners. In fact, virtually all the members of the manufacturing and trading public, whether on the Improvement Commission or not, saw in Chartism a threat to their lives and property. For their part, the Chartists came to find all the nostrums to their ills in "nothing but the Charter." Thus Chartism eclipsed not just the campaign against the local Improvement Act but the fight against the New Poor Law, the stamped press and the Corn Laws.⁷⁷ All this would seem to pose a question as to how much of the campaign can be attributed to a yearning for town improvement, and how much to a protest against the monopoly of power. The latter would seem to have carried greater weight. The campaign against the Barnsley Improvement Commissioners was only resumed in the wake of the enactment of the Public Health Act of 1848.

The role of such 'outdoor' pressure groups as the Health of Towns Association, formed in 1844, in hastening the enactment of the Public Health Act of 1848 is widely recognized.⁷⁸ Local Health of Towns associations quickly sprang up in many places and, though the campaign is normally attributed to middle-class sanitary reformers, in some places, for example in Sheffield, Newcastle and Gateshead the associations contained a large working-class following.⁷⁹ Although Barnsley does not appear to have had

⁷⁷ Ibid., Section II. For the influence of Chartism on the anti-Poor Law agitation see Michael E. Rose, "Poor Law Administration in the West Riding of Yorkshire, (1820-1855)," (Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1965), pp.86ff.

⁷⁸ See Finer, op.cit., pp.237f. Lewis, op.cit., pp.112ff.

⁷⁹ Lewis, op.cit., p.113. Sidney Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield, (Liverpool 1959), p.11.

a Health of Towns association, a sizeable number of both middle- and working-class individuals took enough interest in sanitary reform to constitute a strong pressure group which the Improvement Commissioners could ill-afford to ignore. In fact, by 1850 this group was beginning to exert some influence on the behaviour of the Commissioners. In August 1850 the Commissioners decided to install gas lights in Wilson's Piece, a weavers' ghetto they had persistently ignored, even in the face of widespread agitation in the 1830's.⁸⁰ In 1852 they constructed two deep sewers which served some working-class areas around St. George's Church.⁸¹ These piecemeal measures failed to impress the sanitary reformers who demanded the adoption of the Public Health Act which would sweep away what they saw as an incompetent Improvement Commission. Many Commissioners, under the inspiration of their fellow Commissioner, William Shepherd, a solicitor, hoped to steal the wind from the sanitary reformers' sail by applying for another local Act which would give the Commissioners more powers. As it happened, this turned out to be an explosive suggestion.

On November 7, 1851 a routine fortnightly meeting of the Commissioners, attended only by 7 of them, approved a recommendation by William Shepherd that an application be made for a new local Act to replace that of 1822. A parliamentary notice to that effect was immediately published in the press. The Bill "for better lighting, cleansing, paving, watching and improving the Town of Barnsley ... and for the regulation and establishment of Markets and Fairs within the Town" proposed to increase the area under the jurisdiction of the Improvement Commissioners by 300 yards in every

⁸⁰ Commissioners' Minute Book, Vol.II, p.78. Ranger Report, op.cit., p.9. For the agitation in the 1830's see above, pp. 279-287.

⁸¹ See above, p. 278.

direction. The new body of Commissioners, like the old, elected by co-option, would have powers in accordance with the Commissioner Clauses Act, the Town's Improvement Clauses Act, the Police Clauses Act, and the Markets and Fairs Act, all of 1847. They would have wider powers for levying rates and borrowing money to finance their activities. The Bill also sought to enable the Improvement Commissioners to buy the rights of the Lord of the Manor pertaining to Markets and Fairs, and to levy rates thereof.⁸²

At the beginning of December, it was announced that the proposed legislation would be deposited as a Private Member's Bill. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, a heated public meeting on December 4th, which lasted no less than four hours, decided to reject the Bill and opted for the Public Health Act instead.⁸³ The following nine months saw a tug-of-war between, on the one side, those Improvement Commissioners who supported the private Bill and, on the other, a well-organized group of inhabitants who were not only opposed to the Bill but had enormous faith in the effectiveness of the Public Health Act. The latter group consisted of a wide variety of inhabitants: some Improvement Commissioners who took a different view from that held by their colleagues on the Commission;⁸⁴ clergymen, medical practitioners and other middle-class individuals whose interest in sanitary reform was only one aspect of their 'humanitarian' crusade; traders, manufacturers and small property owners who were frightened of the prospect of paying higher rates under the proposed local Act; and working-class

⁸² P.R.O., M.H.13/16: Ranger Report, op.cit., p.48.

⁸³ See above, p.262. Curiously, whether by coincidence or not, a similar bill had also been rejected only a day earlier in neighbouring Sheffield at a public meeting dominated by working-class radicals: see Pollard, op.cit., p.12. For the role of the Chartists in the Barnsley controversy see below, pp. 290f. & 298f.

⁸⁴ Five Commissioners were on the Committee for promoting the Public Health Act.

radicals and Chartists for whom this confrontation implied not only an opportunity to fight for the betterment of their kind but a resurgence of their struggle, in a different context, against vested interests. The dichotomy between the factions clearly manifested itself during the Ranger inquiry in January 1852. On one side there were witnesses like William Shepherd, a Commissioner, and George Harrison, Clerk to the Commissioners, who were loud in their praise for the record of the Commissioners.⁸⁵

On the other, there were people like John Vallance, a veteran Chartist, who complained: "I have been a resident and a householder in Barnsley for 37 years. During this time I have been called on to pay rates under the Police Act, but I have never been able to get a farthing expended upon the lighting, cleansing, paving or draining of Copper Street in which this house is situated."⁸⁶

In spite of Ranger's inquiry, the promoters of the proposed local Act went ahead with their plans. In February 1852, while the Bill was in Committee stage at the House of Commons, the opposing factions petitioned the House. While sixteen Commissioners petitioned in favour of the Bill, 106 rate-payers signed a long and detailed petition which sought to point out the undesirability of the Bill and urged its withdrawal.⁸⁷ At a rate-payers' meeting held on April 26 to agitate for the adoption of the Public Health Act, the promoters of the Improvement Bill came under acrimonious criticism mainly on two grounds. First, it was claimed, they (the promoters) had contemptuously disregarded the presence of the general public and gone ahead "to alter the government of the town without consulting the inhabitants." Their Bill would create yet another self-perpetuating unrepresentative

⁸⁵ Ranger Report, op.cit., pp.53-55.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.56.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.47-49. P.R.O., M.H.13/16: The original petition with the 106 signatures.

oligarchy which, in the words of John Vallance, would "do as it pleased," irrespective of what the people thought or felt. Secondly, the Bill, if passed into law, would greatly increase the rates. Its promotion would cost the town at least £3,000 compared to only £200 for adopting the Public Health Act. Henry Richardson, a manufacturer, estimated that whereas under the proposed Bill the rate would be 3s. in the Pound, under the Public Health Act it would be only 2s. in the Pound. One speaker suggested that the Bill was "better calculated to drain our pockets than to drain our streets." The proposal in the Bill to buy the manorial rights at the cost of £5,000 and to levy market tolls was greeted with fulmination. It would benefit the Duke of Leeds rather than the inhabitants of Barnsley. Charles Harvey, a linen manufacturer, proposed that the Bill in Parliament could as well be termed "A Bill for promoting the private Interest of the Duke of Leeds and of W. Shepherd and Co." The scale of market tolls would militate against the development of market facilities in the town. Who was "the genius", asked a speaker

who drew up the scale of tolls, for whom nothing appeared too great or too small, and to whom everything was familiar from a load of hay to a string of onions; from a fat bull to a Wangby cheese; and who demanded toll for every animal from a sucking pig to an elephant?

The meeting resolved to intensify their opposition to the Bill and to continue agitating for the Public Health Act. A fund was set up for the purpose, to which some manufacturers and tradesmen contributed, in total, over £300 on that occasion. A "committee of working men" was appointed by the meeting to co-operate with the existing predominantly middle-class committee appointed on December 4, 1851 to promote the Public Health Act.⁸⁸ The impatient committeemen urged the General Board of Health to hasten the publication of

⁸⁸ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.367-369.

Ranger's Report on the sanitation of Barnsley in the hope that the document would promote their cause.⁸⁹

In July 1852, when the Ranger Report was finally published, it sold like hot cakes in Barnsley. Like most of its kind, the Report painted a grimy picture of Barnsley and came out in favour of the Public Health Act being applied not just to the 935 acres under the Commissioners' jurisdiction but to the whole township.⁹⁰ It thus gave extra ammunition to the promoters of the Public Health Act. On August 27 the Commissioners held a special meeting to discuss the document. Although the Commissioners who identified themselves with the Public Health Act movement hailed the Report as a positive contribution to the town's welfare, some Commissioners did not take kindly to it. They charged Ranger with attempting to sell his dogmas by distorting the facts. He had belittled the Commissioners' achievements by grossly exaggerating the town's evils. One Commissioner stated that during his inquiry, William Ranger had carefully avoided a large part of the town in which there was at least one privy to every two houses. The Report, some argued, obscured the true nature of the problem by minimizing the cost of the ventures which the Local Board of Health would have to undertake. How much, one asked, would be spent on purchasing and expanding the waterworks, constructing a new sewerage and drainage system in which Ranger's favourite tubular drains would replace the angular ones, buying the manorial rights, or constructing wash-houses, baths and slaughterhouses? Others were antagonistic to the idea of a local authority taking orders from the General Board of

⁸⁹ P.R.O., M.H.13/16: Peacock to the General Board of Health May 3, 1852.

⁹⁰ Ranger Report, op.cit., esp. pp.42-44.

Health. But, as William Shepherd advised his fellow Commissioners, "it would be as easy to stop the tide as to prevent the application of the (Public Health) Act." Sixteen of the Commissioners, therefore, constituted themselves into a committee which would try to salvage what it could from the apparent ruins of the old system.⁹¹ In a memorial to the General Board of Health, a memorial which sounded like the feeble stirrings of the moribund, the Commissioners' committee accepted Ranger's recommendation for the adoption of the Public Health Act, but added a proviso. They advised the General Board that in the 'Provisional Order' extra powers should be given to the Local Board of Health in respect of the collection of rates and tolls. They also suggested that the existing Commissioners should form the first Local Board of Health, since, in the "excited" atmosphere of the time, immediate elections "would operate prejudicially upon all classes, and especially [sic] the amicable introduction of the Public Health Act."⁹² Alas, they could not stop the tide!

The Committee for promoting the Public Health Act were quick to react. They dismissed the petitioning Commissioners as an unrepresentative clique which did not even constitute a third of the Improvement Commission. The committee found repugnant the suggestion that the first Local Board of Health should consist of the Improvement Commissioners. Some of those Commissioners, the committee argued, had assiduously opposed the Public Health Act. If they were charged with its implementation, "it would militate against the efficient and spirited working of the Act." Admitting of a state of "excitement" in the town, the committee warned that if unelected members were appointed on to the Board of Health, "no more ingenious course

⁹¹ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.384-386; The Barnsley Telegraph, Sept.4, 1852, p.4.

⁹² P.R.O., M.H.13/16: Memorial signed by Charles Tee (chairman) dated September 1, 1852.

of procedure ... would be so well-calculated to create another agitation."⁹³ These were arguments which the General Board of Health could ill-afford to ignore.

Before looking at the introduction of the new system, a word about the Commissioners' record and fate is germane at this point. The nomination of all the town's five medical practitioners to the original Improvement Commission would indicate that the legislation had a sanitation element in its conception. But in practice, the Improvement Commissioners, whether in Barnsley or elsewhere, did not see this as their primary function. Many Improvement Commissions, middle- and upper-class oligarchic institutions as they were, were mainly concerned with protecting life and property, fostering the commercial interests of their towns and catering for the comforts of the 'principal inhabitants'. Their improvement efforts were, therefore, concentrated on the main thoroughfares, the trading centres and, within the framework of urban socio-spatial segregation, the residential areas of the upper echelons of the communities.⁹⁴ It is no wonder, therefore, that in Barnsley the weavers' ghetto of Wilson's Piece, for all its overcrowded and, consequently, dirty condition, failed to attract their attention. Apart from the Commissioners' conception of their own function, another limitation was the Improvement Act itself. It was restrictive in two main ways. First, the Commissioners could not improve private streets, alleys

⁹³ Ibid.: Thomas Cope (chairman) to the General Board of Health, Sept.17,1852.

⁹⁴ See the Webbs, Statutory Authorities, op.cit., pp.274, 314-315. E.P.Hennock, "Urban Sanitary Reform: A Generation before Chadwick?" Economic History Review, 2nd. Series, Vol.X, (1957-58), pp.117-119. Royston Lambert, Sir John Simon, 1816-1904, and English Social Administration, (1963), pp.57-58.

and so on until such areas had been adopted as public streets or highways. This point constituted their defence for their failure to clean such areas as Wilson's Piece. Nor could they compel owners of private houses to carry out such improvements as the construction of drains, something that the Local Board of Health could do under the 1848 Act. Secondly, the rates which the Commissioners could charge were limited by the Act. In fact the upper limit in Barnsley was reached in 1832.⁹⁵ But the fact that the Commissioners did not seek to amend the Act till very late in 1851 testified to their apathy and indifference. But, more specifically, why did some of them so pertinaciously resist the introduction of the Public Health Act? Apart from the obvious reason that the measure would rob them of one aid to social respectability, there were more serious reasons. The Public Health Act empowered the Local Board of Health to compel house-owners to make such improvements to their property as were consonant with public health requirements. Many Commissioners, who themselves were extensive housing property owners,⁹⁶ were scared by the prospects of having to spend large sums of money on the construction of drainage or the building of privies. They feared, also, the rise in the rates.⁹⁷ Lastly, the centralist structure of the new system was resented by some who highly cherished independent local government, even where it meant its domination by an oligarchy.⁹⁸ But the agencies of administrative and social reform gained the upper hand.

⁹⁵ Commissioners' Minute Book, Vol.I, p.331.

⁹⁶ See Chapter One, p.45.

⁹⁷ For comparative references see H.J.Smith, "The Public Health Movement in the mid-nineteenth century," North-East Group for the Study of Labour History, Bulletin No.7, Oct.1973, pp.11-13. Wolland, op.cit., chapters 5 & 6.

⁹⁸ See Robert M. Gutchen, "Local Improvements and Centralization in Nineteenth Century England," The Historical Journal, Vol.IV, No.1, 1961, pp.85-96. Burland, op.cit. Vol.II, p.386.

III. The Local Board of Health: Some Problems and Achievements:

The Provisional Order for the adoption of the Public Health Act received royal assent on May 9, 1853. Elections for the 18 members of the Local Board of Health were scheduled for June 21. A week earlier the committee for promoting the Public Health Act distributed hand-bills instructing members of the public on how to vote:

An attempt will be made to place the administration of the new Act in the hands of men who have strenuously opposed its introduction by creating disunity among those who supported it. To prevent the attainment of this object the Committee strongly impresses upon the Rate Payers the necessity of unanimity. If a list of names be adhered to, all hostile efforts will be unavailing.

The hand-bill contained 18 names which were recommended to the rate-payers for election.⁹⁹ Though the committee's recommendation was not a total success, ten of those recommended were elected with a large vote. Although twelve of the eighteen Board members elected were Improvement Commissioners, most of them had been associated with the campaign for the Public Health Act. But at least four of the Commissioners who had opposed the Act, including William Shepherd, were elected on to the Board.¹⁰⁰ The Board could, therefore, not be expected to work in total harmony.

The Board set out to work immediately. They appointed William Peacock as their Clerk and Michael Thomas Sadler as the town's Medical Officer of Health. In October they appointed a surveyor whom they commissioned to prepare a map which would enable them to construct a comprehensive

⁹⁹ A photo-copy of the hand-bill is in the personal collection of Mr. E. Tasker, J.P., of Hollow Gate, Barnsley. I am indebted to Mr. Tasker for allowing me access to his collection. The Provisional Order is reproduced in The Barnsley Telegraph, Nov.27, 1852, p.4.

¹⁰⁰ P.R.O., M.H.13/16: List of elected members of the Board, with the numbers of votes cast, signed by W.H.Peacock, Returning Officer.

sewerage system. All was smooth - at least on the surface - until the beginning of November when the issue of the supply of gas and water to the town came up.¹⁰¹ At the Board meeting of November 8 it was suggested that an application should be made to Parliament for an Act which would authorize the Board to purchase, by agreement if possible, or compulsorily if necessary, the Barnsley Water and Gas Companies. A resolution to that effect was narrowly passed and a "Gas and Water Committee", consisting of Board members who had no financial interests in the gas and water firms, was appointed to examine the details of the question. But in the following four months there occurred a bitter struggle between, on the one hand, the majority of the Board who were behind the scheme and, on the other, six Board members who were shareholders in either or both of the companies. The latter faction, consisting mainly of individuals who had opposed the introduction of the Public Health Act, tried to block the implementation of the plan by 'filibustering' the debate during the Board meetings.¹⁰²

During the controversy, the Gas and Water Committee hired a civil engineer to assess the waterworks. In January 1854 the Committee recommended that the Board purchase the waterworks at £15,000. The offer was declined by the Water Company on the ground that it was not enough.¹⁰³ The Local Board of Health reacted quickly. They submitted to Parliament "a Bill for better supplying with Gas and Water the Township of Barnsley ..." which sought the authority to buy the Gas and Water companies. In March 1854 they sought the intervention of the General Board of Health in London in securing a speedy enactment of the Bill. In their turn, the proprietors

¹⁰¹ The committee for promoting the Public Health Act had prepared the ground when they first discussed the subject in January 1853:
P.R.O., M.H.13/16: Peacock to General Board of Health, Jan.9, 1853.

¹⁰² P.R.O., M.H.13/16: "Extracts from the Minute Book of the Barnsley Local Board of Health respecting the Gas and Water-works."

¹⁰³ Ibid., Memorandum of the Gas and Water Committee, Feb.9, 1854.

of the Gas and Water companies, especially of the latter, lobbied individual members of the General Board of Health in an attempt to obstruct the passing of the Bill.¹⁰⁴

At this juncture a new dimension was added to the controversy when the residents of Wilson's Piece, the cinderella weavers' district, decided to intervene. On March 13 the inhabitants of Wilson's Piece, meeting in a public house, adopted a memorial to the General Board of Health on the water question. The document, signed by 607 females, or "mothers and daughters" as they styled themselves, called the attention of the General Board "to the destitute condition in which we are placed with regard to the supply of water the principal Element of Existence and Cleanliness." The memorialists expressed anger with "the opposition of the Private Waterworks Company to the Amicable Proposals of the Local Board to purchase for the benefit of the town the waterworks of the said Company." They urged the General Board to press for the passing of the Gas and Water Bill which would enable the Local Board of Health to "place within the reach of every Inhabitant a Plentiful supply of water at a reasonable price."¹⁰⁵

Obviously, the 'fathers and sons' were behind the memorial and had, in fact, instigated it.¹⁰⁶ The memorial was actually in the handwriting of one, Frank Mirfield, a hand-loom weaver who will figure prominently in the forthcoming chapters. He had been transported to Australia for his part in the weavers' riots of 1829, and came back in 1840 to take a leading part in Chartism. It was Mirfield who collected the ladies' signatures, writing

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Peacock to the General Board of Health, Mar.2, 1854.
Shepherd to Ranger Mar.2, 1854. Newman to Shaftesbury, Mar.3, 1854.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., "The Memorial of the Inhabitants Residing in the Portion of Barnsley called Wilson's Piece," signed by 106 "Mothers and Daughters."

¹⁰⁶ See The Sheffield Free Press, Mar.11, 1854, p.3.

names against crosses made by those who were illiterate. Mirfield forwarded the memorial with a covering letter that would delight students of the genesis of 'municipal socialism'. If the Gas and Water Bill was passed, Mirfield argued, it would enable the Local Board of Health "to be the sole distributors, or Proprietors of the Water, which ought to be carried to every workingman's House, as well as to the employers or the rich people." If the Local Board of Health were to buy every gallon of the water they needed for sewerage and street cleansing, it would make it difficult for them to finance the rest of their activities. Moreover, "the Local Board should not occupy the onerous position of water drivers for the Benefit of a Private Water Company - the People think that all profits derivable from Water, or the Labour of the Local Board, should be appropriated to lessen the public Burthens, or extended in necessary improvements of the town..." Mirfield pointed to the neglected condition of Wilson's Piece where the sewers had never been washed down, "except when it rained." Even the attempt of the Local Board of Health to force landlords to increase privy accommodation had been reluctantly responded to and had "drawn upon their heads much undesirable abuse from those stingy gentlemen." In a telling concluding paragraph Mirfield drew the attention of the General Board to the miserable condition of the labouring population generally:

It is my duty also to state that I met with very few Females that could write their names. I was under the necessity of doing that myself too often. This shews that it is high time that the general government of the Country should adopt a vigorous system of education for the people. The low wages paid for labour in this District together with the high priced provisions precludes all possible chance of the workers educating their children. In my visitation through this District to obtain signatures I have seen such scenes of distress that I am unable to describe and I can never forget. 107

¹⁰⁷ P.R.O., M.H.13/16. Mirfield to the General Board of Health, March 16, 1854. The Board's reply was polite, serious and, in many ways favourable. The Board promised to give the matter its urgent attention. Idem. Board to Mirfield, March 26, 1854.

The General Board of Health responded to these pressures by sending J.W. Rammell, a Superintending Inspector, to mediate between the Local Board of Health and the Waterworks Company. Mr. Rammell's intervention secured an agreement between the two parties.¹⁰⁸ On March 31 the Local Board of Health agreed at its meeting to buy all the assets and liabilities of the Waterworks Company at an improved offer of £19,500.¹⁰⁹ On April 13, the company shareholders decided to accept the offer.¹¹⁰ It seems that, because they considered the acquisition of the Water Company to be an essential pre-requisite for the fulfilment of most of their duties, the Local Board decided to shelve or drop their plans to buy the Gas Company so that they could concentrate on the battle for the waterworks.

With the waterworks in their hands, the Board believed that the ground was now laid for the realization of the town's hopes regarding sanitation and improvement. But owing to serious financial constraints, the implementation of the Board's plans was a trifle slow. Apart from the £19,500 for the waterworks, the Board needed an additional £8,000 to enlarge the waterworks, £1,500 to acquire the manorial rights of the Duke of Leeds concerning Markets and Fairs, and £8,000 to construct the sewerage.¹¹¹ The sums involved went beyond the borrowing powers of the Board within the terms of the Public Health Act. The Board, therefore, had to seek and obtain special borrowing powers from the Home Office.¹¹² It was a slow process; nevertheless, a number of things were achieved.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. "Minutes relative to the Barnsley Waterworks and the water supply in Barnsley" by W.H. Peacock for Rammell. Idem: J.W. Rammell to the General Board of Health, April 18, 1854.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., Extract from the Minutes of the Local Board of Health.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Extracts from the Minutes of the Water Company shareholders' meeting.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Peacock to the General Board of Health, Nov. 21, 1854.

¹¹² Ibid., Petition of the Local Board of Health to the Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department, July 5, 1859.

In July 1855 the Board initiated plans to supply the inhabitants of Wilson's Piece with water at a rate not to exceed 1d. for 24 gallons. As well as supplying water to Wilson's Piece for domestic use, the Local Board installed facilities for extinguishing fires and watering the streets.¹¹³ Also in 1855 the detailed map of the town for the construction of the sewerage and drainage system was completed.¹¹⁴ In 1859 the Local Board adopted a plan for a sewerage system consisting of 1,070 yards of the main sewer fed by six branch sewers, which, in turn, were to be fed by house drainage. Gulley grates were to be provided throughout the entire system to trap rain water and liquid sewage from the surface. Egg-shaped and circular stoneware pipes were to be used. And there were plans also to convert the sewage into manure. Exclusive of house drainage, the entire public sewerage system, consisting of the main and branch sewers, measured 12,706 yards or 7 miles and 386 yards.¹¹⁵ By authority of a decisive rate-payers' poll held on August 21, 1860, the Local Board acquired the Markets and Fairs rights from the executors of the will of the deceased Duke of Leeds at an agreed cost of £2,900.¹¹⁶ In 1862 the Board secured an Act of Parliament authorizing them to construct new waterworks which would enable them to obtain better water from Ingbirchworth, a village 9 miles from Barnsley. Numerous complaints had been raised about the water from the Dearne which was said to be hard, impure and dangerous to health.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, p.59.

¹¹⁴ P.R.O.,M.H.13/16: Peacock to the General Board of Health, May 19, 1855. The map itself is in the Newman and Bond (Solicitors) Collection of the Sheffield Central Library, Archives Department, NBC 391.

¹¹⁵ P.R.O.,M.H.13/16: Rowell: "Report upon the proposed sewerage works for Barnsley," Oct.19, 1857. It seems the plan was completed almost in its entirety; see footnote 118 and 119.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Peacock to Taylor, May 8, 1860.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., Rowell: "Report on the proposed works for extending the water supply of the Town of Barnsley," Jan.26,1858. Idem.: Report of the chemist appointed by the General Board of Health, dated October 11, 1860. Idem., General Board of Health to Local Board of Health ordering a public inquiry on the issue of the new waterworks.

The new waterworks were not completed till February 1868.¹¹⁸ Apart from these achievements, the Local Board was able to boast of some more at the public inquiry on the incorporation of the town, held on January 12, 1869. They had issued bye-laws to regulate lodging houses; repaired and maintained 24 miles of road surface; built and maintained a public park; built a cemetery; and improved the market facilities.¹¹⁹

Two broad conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing discussion. First, that it is difficult to get a good, not to say accurate, picture of the conditions of public health in the period that we are dealing with. Sanitation as an issue did not lend itself to rational, not to mention scientific, argument because the frontiers of medical science were still very limited. Some of the protagonists were more often than not unable to disentangle fact from fiction. Medical practitioners, engineers, political economists, social and administrative reformers, and radicals all, as it were, threw their hats into the ring and exchanged arguments which often generated more heat than light. Nevertheless, to the extent that the arguments raised and the actions taken give us information on some of the burning issues of the time, issues which bore upon human condition and behaviour and influenced public policy, they constitute valuable history.

¹¹⁸ T. Lingard (publ.), Municipal Incorporation of Barnsley: Report of the Proceedings at the Public Inquiry, (Barnsley, 1869), p.28.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp.28-29, 33.

Secondly, as it has been shown in the last two sections, the working class was not the idle beneficiary of middle-class agitation for sanitary reform. It was very much in the battle field and probably helped to determine the tone and result of the struggle. Their effort will be seen in its proper perspective as we turn to the second part of this study which examines labouring Barnsley's industrial and political struggles.

PART 2

LABOUR'S STRUGGLES

CHAPTER SIX

DISPUTES IN THE LINEN TRADE.

Manufacturers and weavers resemble the positive and negative forces of electricity; that is to say they mutually repel each other.

(John H. Burland, a one time linen weaver).

I. The Focus:

In looking at the disputes in the Barnsley linen trade six of the salient points which emerged from our earlier study of the industry ought to be re-iterated because, together, they went a long way in dictating the occurrence, tone, character and trend of the disputes.¹ The first two were the secular decline of the linen trade and, a corollary, the vulnerability of the industry to trade crises. The third influence was the almost permanent glut in the labour market. These three factors not only exerted a downward pressure upon the rates of pay but also limited the power of the workers in the industry to resist wage cuts. The fourth was the importance of a unitary price list, enforceable throughout the town and its environs. Under the prevailing social and, especially, industrial conditions the price list became institutionalized as a vehicle for collective bargaining. Since the long-term trend of the piece rates was downward, the weavers could only arrest a further deterioration of

¹ See Chapter Two above.

the levels of their earnings by preventing their masters from departing from an existing standard price list. Such a departure from the unitary price list by one manufacturer, or by a group of manufacturers, not only undermined the weavers' earnings but also aroused fears among the rest of the manufacturers of being undersold in the cloth market. The fifth factor was what we may loosely describe as a 'ghetto' situation in the linen weaving community. The fact that the weavers as a large body lived in close proximity to one another,² sharing as they did the common experiences of a community of 'proletarianized', semi-skilled artisans, with such binding institutions as the public house, the chapel or the friendly society, tended to have a centripetal effect, especially during the trade disputes, and determined the weavers' propensity to combine. Lastly, the presence in the town of the linen manufacturers also influenced the nature of the disputes. On the one hand, because the manufacturers were part of a wider, albeit 'incomplete' town community,³ they sometimes felt it incumbent upon themselves to settle the trade disputes in a way which would not incense local public opinion. In this respect, it was possible in some cases for the weavers to wring some concessions from their masters. On the other hand, the manufacturers were able to unite as a strong and influential local interest group, capable on many occasions of warding off the assault by their employees.

For most of our period the major disputes were general throughout the town and its neighbourhood. Each dispute was a great event in its own right and, for this reason, the disputes will be examined individually in chronological order. But three major themes, themes which have dominated the historiography of industrial conflict, especially strikes, will run through them all. The first is the explanation of the causations of trade

² See Chapter One, Section IV above.

³ Ibid.

disputes. In a recent article Charles Tilly and Edward Shorter have correctly summarised the three approaches to the sources of industrial conflict:⁴ 1) The 'labour relations' approach which identifies the causes of a dispute in a unit of production - a firm or industry - by analysing the pattern and dynamics of industrial relations within that unit. 2) The 'economic fluctuations' approach which sees the major determinants of strike activity as being the variations in the business cycle and the secular shifts in the economy. 3) The 'social change' approach which assumes that strike activity is an expression of social discontent, and finds explanatory variables in the different elements of social change. Although the above typology is a useful analytical tool, in fact not all scholars have compartmentalized their studies of strike activity in this way.⁵ While at one level trade disputes were generated by the dynamics of industrial relations within a given firm or industry, industrial conflict in general as often as not occurred within a wider social and economic setting. Since each dispute constituted a unique historical event, the impact attributable to any of these factors depended on the circumstances surrounding the dispute in question. It is also important to give attention to mediating factors and special events or accidents peculiar to each strike.

The second theme concerns the characterization of industrial action. Historians have tended to label strikes as either 'primitive' or 'modern'. In 'measuring the evolution of strike movement,'⁶ some have concluded

⁴ Charles Tilly & Edward Shorter, "The Shape of Strikes in France, 1830-1960," Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol.3 (1971), pp.60-86.

⁵ See, for example, Eric J. Hobsbawm, Economic Fluctuations and Some Social Movements since 1800, in Labouring Men (1968 ed.), pp.126-148.

⁶ Peter N. Stearns, "Measuring the Evolution of Strike Movements," International Review of Social History, Vol.XIX, Pt.1, (1974) pp.1-27.

that in present industrial society the strike has taken on a new 'sophistication' as a means of regulating industrial conflict, that it has moved from the 'savage' to the 'civilized'.⁷ The primitive strike belonged to the 'pre-industrial' phase. As a spontaneous response to worsening conditions or falling wages, it was unorganized and tended to rely on the riot rather than on rational argument. As a localized affair, it depended on community rather than class affiliation. The modern strike, on the other hand, is 'sophisticated'. It is an organized, large-scale and class-based struggle which is forward-looking in the sense that, instead of merely organizing for defence, as in the case of the 'primitive' strike, it sets out to demand new rights. Its major characteristic is that it is more inclined to negotiate than to indulge in violent action.⁸ The primitive strike is seen as a characteristic form of 18th century protest - industrial or otherwise. The 1840's in Britain are seen as a period of transition to the 'industrial' or 'modern' phase.⁹ In general the mode of industrial action in the Barnsley linen trade tended to move from 'primitive' to 'modern'. But a close and careful examination of each dispute would show that these concepts, useful as they may be, sometimes beg more questions than they answer. In some instances these two traditions, insofar as they existed, tended, in some respects, to run into each other.

Finally, there is the question of organization or unionization among the linen weavers. In their work on trade unionism the Webbs have traced the development of workers' organizations from responses of an ephemeral

⁷ Ibid., passim; Tilly & Shorter, op.cit., p.60.

⁸ Stearns, op.cit., esp. pp.1-17; G. Rudé, The Crowd in History (1964); E.J.Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (1971 ed.), esp. Introd. & Ch.VII.

⁹ Rudé, op.cit., esp. Ch.12.

nature to more formal and permanent organizations.¹⁰ Although the Barnsley linen weavers attempted on occasions to create formal organizations, they never succeeded in creating a trade union which stood as a relatively permanent institution until late in our period. But the crucial question is whether such an institution was really possible or indeed necessary; whether the existing machinery of collective bargaining was not capable of performing the function of a permanent trade union. The answer is that under the prevailing industrial conditions a permanent formal institution was difficult to achieve and, in any case, the existing social arrangement rendered it largely irrelevant.

II. The Strike of 1818:

The Barnsley linen weavers' strike which began on September 28, 1818 has been described by a local annalist as "the first weavers' turnout."¹¹ There may well have been strikes in earlier years but very probably this one was the first general strike which involved the whole weaving population

¹⁰ Sydney & Beatrice Webb, The History of Trade Unionism (1911 ed.), Ch.I.

¹¹ Eli Hoyle, "History of Barnsley and the Surrounding Districts," (unpubl. Vol., B.R.L.), p.236. A brief account of the strike is also given in John Vallance's evidence, P.P.1840 (43-11), XXIII, Pt.II: Assistant Commissioners' Report on the Handloom Weavers, pp.480-481. See also Joseph Wilkinson, "Local History" (MS. & Clippings, B.R.L.), p.93.

of the town and its environs. It was a wages dispute. The weavers, who two years earlier had acquiesced in a reduction of their wage rate in the hope that it would be restored in times of better trade, believed that the brisk performance of the linen trade in 1818 warranted a wage increase. They demanded a reinstatement of the price list negotiated in 1814. A few weeks after the outbreak of the dispute, the manufacturers offered them an advance averaging 2s. in the Pound on common goods and 9d. in the Pound on superior linens. But the weavers rejected this offer which amounted to about half of what they were demanding.

By this time the linen trade had fully recovered from the effects of the depression of 1816. The manufacturers' order books were full and employment among the weavers was much more regular. But the weavers complained of a rising cost of living, especially the high price of provisions.¹² At the national level the general domestic price index had risen since mid-1816 to a peak in April 1818. Although from this moment it began to decline, no appreciable results were felt by the consuming public. Grain prices rose even at a higher rate than the general price index. From June 1816 to June 1817 the harvests both in Britain and on the Continent were so poor that wheat prices shot up sharply. Fears of another bad harvest in 1818 brought on by a few months' drought arrested any fall in agricultural prices.¹³ The weavers' complaint about a high cost of living would seem to have been justified.

¹² Hoyle, loc.cit.

¹³ A.D.Gayer, W.W. Rostow & A.J. Schwartz, The Growth and Fluctuations of the British Economy, 1790-1850, Vol.I (1953), pp.115,140-141,169.

Occurring as it did in an atmosphere of disturbed industrial peace in the manufacturing districts, the Barnsley strike was bound to assume a mass dimension. From June that year Lancashire was swept by a wave of industrial conflict involving the Manchester building workers, the Stockport jenny spinners and power-loom weavers, the Manchester spinners, and the hand-loom weavers of the whole of Lancashire whose turnout on September 1st climaxed the whole movement. The Lancashire weavers who were demanding an advance of 7s. in the Pound soon took to the streets of their towns in monster demonstrations. By September 11th most of them had gone back to work; only the weavers of Bolton, Bury and Stockport were still out. Some of the Lancashire strikes achieved a measure of success but others were badly defeated and a number of strike leaders were incarcerated.¹⁴

Although the Barnsley strike occurred after most of the Lancashire disputes had been settled, these earlier events seem to have influenced the course of events in Barnsley. No incontrovertible evidence is available which would prove direct contacts between Lancashire and Barnsley, but there is circumstantial evidence which is suggestive of such contact. Moreover, it is arguable that the Lancashire strikes, coupled as they were with a wide press publicity, had an inspirational effect on the events in Barnsley. The brief period between mid-1818 and early 1819 saw an attempt to form a general union of the working classes.¹⁵ Although there is no

¹⁴ For a fuller story of these strikes see: J.L. & B. Hammond, The Skilled Labourer, 1760-1832 (1919), pp.94-121; A. Aspinall, The Early English Trade Unions (1940), pp.246-310; E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (1968 ed.), p.308; Duncan Bythell, The Handloom Weavers (1969), pp.193-197; G.D.H. Cole, Attempts at General Union, 1818-1834 (1953), pp.4-13; The Leeds Mercury Sept. 5 & 12, 1818, pp.3.

¹⁵ See Cole, op.cit., pp.9-12; Thompson, loc.cit.; Hammonds, op.cit., p.96; G.D.H.Cole & A.W. Filson, British Working Class Movements: Select Documents, 1785-1875 (1967 ed.), pp.149-158.

evidence that the Barnsley weavers joined the 'Philanthropic Society', the organization may have psychologically stimulated a sense of solidarity among the different industrial and domestic workers. Early in September the Leeds Intelligencer complained: "Several delegates from the refractory workmen in Manchester, or rather, from their seditious instigators, have arrived in this town and neighbourhood, with a view of exciting similar commotions in the Leeds district."¹⁶ But the Leeds Mercury discounted these allegations adding that according to the results of its own investigations, the Manchester men were in Leeds to collect subscriptions for the support of their strike.¹⁷ It is almost certain that the Lancashire weavers campaigned for financial support in Barnsley as well, if only because quite a few of the Barnsley weavers at this time had migrated from Lancashire¹⁸ and may have felt duty bound to support their 'brothers' in their county of origin. In their turn, the Barnsley weavers obtained some financial aid from other towns, including those in Lancashire. A Barnsley manufacturer complained in November that the linen weavers' strike fund was fed by huge subscriptions from "different parts of the country."¹⁹

The Barnsley strike was characterized by four main features: the monster demonstrations, the coercion of strike breakers, the imprisonment of some of the strikers mainly under the Master and Servant laws, and the campaign for the support of public opinion. Like their Lancashire counterparts, the Barnsley weavers held frequent large meetings attended on

¹⁶ Cited in The Leeds Mercury, Sept.12, 1818, p.3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See Chapter One above, p.33.

¹⁹ The Leeds Intelligencer, Nov.2, 1818, p.3.

occasions by as many as 2,000 of them. They also marched almost daily in monster demonstrations along the different streets of the town. At the beginning of November seven weavers were sentenced to three months' imprisonment for "having wilfully and maliciously decoyed, persuaded, solicited, intimidated, influenced and attempted to prevail on Mary Barnes, weaver, to leave her employment for the purpose of obtaining an advance in wages."²⁰ It seems that the seven weavers were charged under the Combination Acts, most probably 39 and 40 Geo III, Cap.106, Section 3 which provided for punishment for "decoying" or "intimidating" others from work.²¹

Earlier on, on September 27th, fifteen linen weavers were committed to Wakefield prison for leaving their work unfinished. In their defence, the weavers submitted that they had all sent written notices eight days previous to quitting their work. Ignoring this defence, the magistrates offered to liberate the weavers if the latter accepted to resume their employment; but the fifteen weavers unanimously rejected the offer and went to prison.²² In November eight more weavers were imprisoned, also for leaving their work unfinished, bringing the total of incarcerated weavers to thirty.²³

Apart from their meetings and demonstrations, the weavers carried their campaign to the press. On October 31st their strike committee published a letter in the Leeds Mercury entitled: "The Weavers' Defence: Being an Appeal to the Candid, Liberal and Humane."²⁴ They appealed for public support

²⁰ Hoyle, loc.cit.

²¹ See George White, "A few remarks on the state of the laws... for regulating masters and work people" (1823) in Trade Unions under the Combination Acts (New York, 1972).

²² The Leeds Mercury, Oct.31, 1818, p.3.

²³ Ibid., Nov.7, 1818, p.3. Before the eight weavers were taken to court, their employers had offered them an advance which fell short of their demand; they declined this offer: Idem.

²⁴ Ibid., Oct. 31, 1818, p.1.

in their struggle, for what they earned was not worth their labour and was insufficient for subsistence. Their letter condemned the arrogance of "those who through our labour and the sweat of our brows, have been enabled to acquire independence, honours and consequence." They added:

The cause we are engaged in is the cause of our children, and we are determined not to relax in our endeavours to obtain for them food, raiment and education, which we have not, through our poverty, hitherto been able to do.

The letter provoked an angry retort from "A Manufacturer" who, understandably, sent his reply to the more sympathetic Leeds Intelligencer. The anonymous manufacturer alleged that the Barnsley weavers had no case, since they earned "more than any other weavers in England." He found the weavers' acts of "intimidation" utterly unforgivable. During the trade depression after the wars, when the manufacturers' unsold stocks were "accumulating to a frightful extent," the weavers had nonetheless been kept in employment. But "now that trade is happily improving, and commerce is moving in its wonted channels, the first specimen we receive of their gratitude is this: to compel us to give them so exorbitant a price for their labour." The strike, he alleged, was politically motivated, for "the mainspring of the present unpleasant disposition manifested in the labouring classes is the revolutionary spirit which was so plentifully infused into their minds at the time of the meetings of the self-styled Reformers."²⁵

In the next issue of the Intelligencer the manufacturer published an angrier and much longer letter in which he unleashed a scathing attack on the striking weavers who, he alleged, had grown more and more unsettled and

²⁵ The Leeds Intelligencer, Nov.2, 1818, p.3: original emphasis. See Chapter Eight on the radical activities in the immediate post-Napoleonic war years.

refractory, and had manifested "a most determined spirit of hostility" against both the manufacturers and those few weavers who had attempted to finish their work. He produced figures to show that the Barnsley linen weavers earned more than those of Knaresborough, Leeds, Darlington and Brunton. He defended the manufacturers' action in invoking the law of Master and Servant and having some of the weavers imprisoned for leaving their work unfinished. The weavers' reaction to the convictions, he argued, was out of all proportions:

In spite of all our previous warnings and expostulations, now that the law had been necessarily enforced upon them we are stigmatised as tyrants, persecutors, grinders of the faces of the poor, and every opprobrious epithet and invective that the most malignant minds can devise, and I am sorry to state, but truth compels me, that the females of the lower orders, to the great deterioration of their sex, and characters, have throughout been far more violent and intemperate than the men, indulging in every species of abuse, and in many instances, behaving more like fiends than human creatures.

The manufacturer quoted cases of strike breakers against whom violence had been either threatened or actually committed. The turnouts had sent them (the strike breakers) threatening letters, denounced them by "hissing, hooting and reviling them," or destroying their yarn or even their looms, and smashing their windows: "We seem very likely to have the good old times of Ned Lud returning again to amuse us with his wonderful exploits."

The manufacturer also expressed his fears about the daily tumultuous meetings

where 1,500 to 2,000 persons are convened everyday, and are harangued by men who have little fluency of tongue, and who wish to gain the applause of the gaping multitude by the prostitution of the small share of talent they have got to the most base purposes. From these too emanates all the mischief that is committed in this town and neighbourhood, for when our men leave there after hearing thundering Philippics against the manufacturers, their minds are inflamed and raised to the highest pitch of exacerbation, and capable for the time being of committing the depredations.

He regretted the effect of the strike on the children of the town "who will receive such a contamination from six weeks' continual indulgence in idleness, insolence, and mendicity." Referring to the use of children in collecting money to support the strike, he said:

Whole hordes of little children from 6 to 12 years of age have been sent out daily by their parents, &c. as mendicants up and down the town and adjacent country, by which means deeply rooted habits of dissimulation will be acquired, and perhaps initiation into petty thieving and pilfering. ... I am persuaded that this short period will produce more harm to the rising generation than all the combined efforts of Sunday schools and other good institutions can counteract for many months to come.

Reiterating his earlier theme, that the seditious radical ideas underlay the troubles, he wondered, however, "how men who are hardly capable of deducing an obvious effect from the simplest cause, are fit judges of the merits of the Corn Bill, Public Debt and general government of a mighty nation like this?"²⁶ Although the above account was alarmist and one-sided, coming as it did from a protagonist in the dispute, it suggests that the strike was probably marked with some violent incidents.²⁷

Even after the strike had ended, in mid-November, the dust from the battlefield took a long time to settle down. An anonymous weaver felt it his duty to defend the cause of the Barnsley weavers against the allegedly malicious smears of the anonymous manufacturer, who had attempted "to throw dust in the eyes of the public." The weaver claimed in the Leeds Mercury that the manufacturer's figures of the weavers' earnings were misleading, since they referred only to a tiny minority of weavers who wove

²⁶ Ibid., Nov. 9, 1818, p.3: original emphasis.

²⁷ See Hoyle, loc.cit.

superior products. The majority of weavers, maybe about four-fifths, wove common linen for which they received a mere pittance. The weaver produced statistics, based on his own experience, to prove that the weavers' actual earnings fell far short of what appeared in the price list. Apart from incurring expenses on such items as loom rent, winding, pickers, shuttles, knives, candles, tallow, and starch, they had to submit to arbitrary reductions imposed upon them by the manufacturers. The weavers, he concluded, had "only discharged their duty towards themselves and towards their children."²⁸

By November 20th the strike had been settled and the masters, with one unknown exception, had reinstated their workmen. The weavers only achieved a partial success. The settlement consisted of three points: 1) The employers agreed to adhere to regular standard warp lengths. 2) They also agreed to seek the release of the weavers who had been imprisoned for leaving their work unfinished, and 3) In their turn, the weavers accepted the advance in wages which the masters had offered them in the early stages of the strike.²⁹ The next dispute happened five years later in 1823.

²⁸ The Leeds Mercury, Nov.21, 1818, p.3. That the above exchanges were conducted through two different papers is a curious point. Although the Mercury cannot be said to have espoused the workers' cause, it advocated Parliamentary reform. Working class radicals in Barnsley bought it along with more radical papers like the Black Dwarf, and the Manchester Observer.

²⁹ Ibid.

III. The 'Fent' Strike of 1823:

The strike was on a purely local issue and does not appear to have had any connection with the contemporaneous weavers' strikes in Glasgow, Bolton, Dundee or Frome.³⁰ Since the establishment of the Barnsley linen trade, each weaver had a perquisite of a yard of cloth from the end of every piece he wove. This piece of linen, which the weaver retained for his own use, was called a 'fent'. With fents the weavers made themselves shirts, aprons, pillow-cases, table-covers, and so on. They would dispose of what fents they did not need in any way they wished; it was common practice, we are told, for housewives to hawk their fents. A contemporary wrote: "For many a child when crying for bread has had a fent put into his hand, and been told to go to some neighbouring shop and ask for a certain weight of bread in exchange."³¹ In April 1823 the Barnsley manufacturers decided to disallow the fents. On May 1st the weavers went on strike in an attempt to restore their fents.

The masters' measure was not prompted by any economic pressures, for at this time trade was good.³² They acted ostensibly to put an end to thefts. Pieces of linen goods, they alleged, had been very frequently stolen from the bleach grounds and other places, cut into fents and disposed of as weavers' perquisites, thus preventing the possibility of detection.³³ But, on the manufacturers' own admission, frauds and thefts connected with fents were not a new phenomenon; they had existed for years,

³⁰ See Aspinall, op.cit., pp.363-374. The only exception was the subsequent strike in Knaresborough, infra, p. 322.

³¹ Cited in J.H. Burland, "Annals of Barnsley" (4 Vols., MS., B.R.L.), Vol.I, p.413. See also Hoyle, op.cit., p.250.

³² Hoyle, loc.cit.

³³ The Leeds Mercury, June 21, 1823, p.3.

probably from the early days of the linen trade.³⁴ The manufacturers' action, therefore, represented something fundamentally deeper than what they claimed. The fent was a hangover of the pre-industrial paternalism which characterized the relationships between masters and men. But with the thrust of the Industrial Revolution, there arose a "conflict between traditionalism and the new political economy."³⁵ As one historian has put it, "economic rationalization nibbled through the bonds of paternalism," and customary relations progressively gave way to the market relations, or, the cash nexus.³⁶

The weavers' struggle in attempting to resist the withdrawal of the fent can be interpreted at two levels. Unschooled as they were in the new faith of political economy, the weavers might have viewed the disallowance of the fent as an assault on a whole world of customary relations and trust. Perhaps they were unwilling to accept the sheer brutal simplicity of market relationships, unembellished by any reference to customary rights and obligations. Although this argument cannot be supported with documentary evidence, it draws our attention to a force which was likely, though remotely so, to have come into play. On the other hand, although the weavers might

³⁴ Ibid. Elsewhere we are told of the Lancashire cotton manufacturers' complaint in 1799; they accused their weavers of "altering, removing and destroying the marks on the warps and stretching them to an unusual and extraordinary length to obtain large fents." Cited in Bythell, op.cit., p.124.

³⁵ E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century," Past and Present, No.50, (Feb.1971), p.79.

³⁶ Ibid., "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," Journal of Social History, Vol.VII, No.4, (Summer 1974), p.385. A study of the resistance by the dockyard labour force in 18th century London against withdrawal of their perquisites (chips of wood) is in Peter Linebaugh, "Tyburn: A Study of Crime and the Labouring Poor in London during the first half of the 18th Century" (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Warwick, 1975).

have had little or no understanding of the world of political economy, they lived in it; the cash nexus was part of their lives. The fent was, as it were, part of their wage packet. Its withdrawal, they believed, constituted an attack on their standards of living. This, in fact, was their main argument. It seems that the weavers were already attuned to the brutal forces of a market economy. During the dispute, a recent arrival into the town, who signed himself as 'A.B.', described the usefulness of the fents in these terms:

When I first came to the place, it was in the depth of winter, and such a winter for frost and snow as many most keenly felt, especially those poor weavers who, either from want of employment or the lowness of wages, had but a scant supply of nourishment and clothing to protect them from the inclemency of the season. I have beheld many weavers' children who had neither shoes nor stockings, nor scarcely any other covering except that which was made from fents. 37

In his "Weavers' Consolation," A.B. expressed his sympathy for the industrious but much exploited weavers:

Come weavers, for I know in this your humble station.
You who the shuttle throw have much need for consolation
From morn to night you toil so hard to get a little bread
And often very late it is before you get to bed.

Betimes your children's tender necks are fitted to the yoke,
I do not say it is a crime; it neither is a joke;
Their little hands and little feet alike must nimbly go
While flying of the shuttle like an arrow to and fro.

Your pieces they are very long; the prices they are short;
I know that it is very wrong with things like these to port;
But Gripus in his greediness with his cast-iron hand
Against the poor man always does by sore oppression stand.

When victuals rise uncommon high, while wages they keep low,
It makes the wretched poor to sigh and fills them full of woe;
But if the weavers lose their fents, to them a loss immense,
They must in a denuded state and sorrow go from hence.

37 Cited in Burland, op.cit., p.415.

How vast a difference here there is twixt industry and sloth-
Betwixt the idle glutton and the man who weaves the cloth;
The weaver he can scarcely get sufficiency of bread,
The glutton eats and drinks so much he can scarce get to bed. 38

Isaac Masters, a weaver cum poet, made the same point:

The fents are off! How cruel is the sound
To us who always labour underground;
Where noxious vapours ever constant play,
Which we must breathe while working all day,
In hopes an honest livelihood to gain
With toil incessant, oftentimes with pain;
Yet all our efforts prove of no avail
Oppressed by those who fents do now curtail. 39

During one of their street demonstrations, the weavers endeavoured to bring home to the public the seriousness of their case. A loom was hoisted on a wagon and paraded through the streets. A weaver, naked to the waist, pretended to ply his trade at the loom. His half-nakedness was intended to symbolize the extreme poverty to which the weavers and their families would be reduced by the disallowance of the fents.⁴⁰

The strike was not without incidents and not without its martyrs. In the early days of the strike, on May 5th, a serious riot occurred at Greenfoot, a hamlet in the outskirts of Barnsley, where a large body of weavers went to pursue a strike breaker who had taken out work without a fent from Joseph Beckett's warehouse. Mr. Beckett, himself a resident magistrate, accompanied by some other manufacturers and the constables,

38 Ibid., extracts from A.B.'s "The Weavers' Consolation."

39 Ibid., p.414.

40 Hoyle, op.cit., p.250. Anon., Sketches of Early Barnsley (n.d.), p.14.

went to Greenfoot to protect the strike breaker:

The truth I sing, how on the other day,
Soon in the morning of the fifth of May,
Some petty tyrants to the Old Town went
To guard a wretch who wove without a fent. 41

But the angry weavers, under the leadership of Patrick, an Irishman, were too strong for Beckett's forces:

The doughty weavers then assembled round,
And formed a circle on the rising ground,
In portent whispers round the ring it went -
"Must all be lost? And must we lose the fent?"
In tones of thunder each and all did cry -
"We'll rescue all or in the contest die!"
Then valiant Patrick marshalled all his men,
And bravely Patrick marched along before,
While others followed and soon gained the door.
Crash went the door! The bolts did quickly fly! 42

The weavers seized the yarn which was then borne on the head of a woman nicknamed "Straw Bet" who, accompanied by a large group of weavers, took it back to town. She flung the yarn over the gates of Beckett's warehouse, at which point she was apprehended and later sent to prison for three months. On July 23rd two more rioters, alleged to be ring leaders, were gaoled for 2 months with hard labour. 43

41 Opening lines of Isaac Masters' "The Memorable Battle of Greenfoot," addressed "to him who is the enemy of all oppression and a friend to the oppressed. To him who feels for the unfortunate weavers. To him whose hand is ever open to relieve the wants and to palliate the miseries of his fellow creatures. ...", Burland, op.cit., p.413.

42 Ibid., "Valiant Patrick" probably refers to the Irishman Patrick Flanigan who played a leading role in the strikes of 1829: See Section V below.

43 See Hoyle, loc.cit. Tradition has it that the commander of the yeomanry refused to commit his forces to Mr. Beckett's aid, Re: "The Memorable Battle of Greenfoot", cited.

From the early days of the strike "hundreds" of weavers in the town and the neighbourhood left to take up employment elsewhere - thanks to the good trade. Worried that such a trend of events might lead to their defeat, the Barnsley manufacturers convinced their Knaresborough counterparts (Knaresborough being the next important linen weaving centre after Barnsley) to reduce their prices in order to arrest the influx of Barnsley weavers into Knaresborough. The measure provoked a general strike in Knaresborough which lasted longer than the Barnsley dispute.⁴⁴

On July 24th most of the weavers tendered a formal submission and agreed to weave without fents. Others soon followed suit. Their strike fund was exhausted, three of their colleagues were behind bars, and some of their members were gone, probably for ever. Perhaps on the eve of their submission they had found solace in A.B.'s concluding stanzas which pointed at 'Sugarcandy Mountain'. Perhaps they hoped that at some distant future they and their masters would continue to occupy opposite sides, but this time separated by a celestial chasm; they in heaven and their former oppressors in Hell:

May the poor converted be, also know their sins forgiven,
That they may Blessed Jesus see, and rest with him in heaven;
No wheel to turn, nor shuttle to throw, nor treddle there to tread;
But a sweet rest will there be found for every pious head.

Here poor men's labours find an end, and also all their care;
Come then, ye poor, and meekly spend, a little time in prayer;
Be sure that God will listen and will send you pardon down,
And when he takes you hence he will reward you with a Crown.

Oppression ne'er come within high heaven's pearly gates,
Nor any other carnal thing which the Almighty hates;
If ye are poor and in distress, be patient, wait awhile,
And heaven will recompense your toil and ever on your smile. ⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Wilkinson, op.cit., p.94; The Leeds Mercury, June 14 & July 12, 1823, pp.3.

⁴⁵ From A.B.'s "The Weavers' Consolation," Burland, op.cit., pp.415-416.

IV. 1825: Year of Unionism and Selective Strikes:

By 1825 the linen trade had fully recovered from the damage of the fent strike and was enjoying a boom. At national level 1825 was the peak of the economic upswing which had begun about 1822.⁴⁶ But the boom was accompanied by a sudden rise in living costs.⁴⁷ Seeing such prosperity around them, the weavers expressed their desire to partake of this boom. In January 1825 they petitioned their masters for a restoration of the fent, but to the masters, the fent was dead and buried; they had no wish to resurrect it. Manufacturers refused to reopen the door for "many frauds and larcenies." A number of employing houses, however, agreed to an advance in wages in lieu of fents.⁴⁸ Many weavers remained dissatisfied; conflict was inevitable. But instead of the hitherto familiar spontaneous action, punctuated by bouts of violence, the weavers put up a well thought out strategy of action. It worked.

The repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824 sparked off a flare of unionization and industrial action among many occupational groups, not least the textile workers.⁴⁹ In January 1825 the Barnsley Weavers' Association was born, but it is not known what proportion of the weavers joined it. At this time of high employment the weavers managed to accumulate a large fund; there were hardly any payment defaults. When the manufacturers stubbornly refused to respond to the weavers' application for an advance in their wages, the Association called for industrial action. In June they launched selective strikes. The strategy this time was to

⁴⁶ Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, op.cit., p.171. Hoyle, op.cit., p.255.

⁴⁷ W.W. Rostow, British Economy of the 19th Century, (Oxford, 1968 ed.), p.117.

⁴⁸ Hoyle, op.cit., p.250.

⁴⁹ Rostow, op.cit., pp.116f; S. & B. Webb, op.cit., pp.98f; A.E. Musson, British Trade Unionism, 1800-1875 (1972), p.27.

pick off one or two manufacturers at a time. Weavers in active employment would give financial support to the group on strike by subscribing to the Association's strike fund. Lots were cast to decide which firm was going to be the first victim; it was John Cordeux and Son. The firm's weavers demanded an average increase of 1s. per bunt. The employers rejected the application and, when their weavers went on strike, the partners sought the aid of the other manufacturers in breaking the strike. Cordeux and Son gave their yarn to other manufacturers so that the latter would in turn put it out to be woven by their own weavers who were not on strike. The trick was discovered by the Weavers' Association which, consequently, decided to escalate the struggle. A larger selection of manufacturers was hit by the strike. One by one the manufacturers yielded to the weavers' demands and by the end of November the weavers' victory was complete.⁵⁰

The strikes of 1825 differed in three ways from the previous strikes of 1818 and 1823: they were selective and not general; they were not marked by violence, arrests or prosecutions; and they secured total victory. In the euphoric atmosphere of 1825, when the Combination Acts had been repealed and industry enjoyed general prosperity, the weavers were inspired with confidence and found new strength in their organization. They had an opportunity to plan their action and build up financial strength. On the other side, the manufacturers were able to accede, albeit belatedly, to the weavers' demands because the prosperity of their businesses permitted it. But in 1829, a year of economic disaster, the weavers were not so lucky.

⁵⁰ Hoyle, op.cit., p.255.

V. The 1829 Strikes and Riots:

In an earlier chapter we saw how the depression of 1826 led to widespread unemployment and suffering in the whole of the West Riding, including Barnsley.⁵¹ What is not known is what happened to the list of prices that year. Apparently, there were no disputes in the linen trade. Most probably manufacturers preferred laying their men off to reducing the piece rates. The depression of 1829 came not only with unemployment but also, for those who could still get employment, with drastic wage reductions. In May reports circulated in the West Riding press that employment in the Barnsley linen trade was extremely short.⁵² Faced with diminishing orders, the manufacturers believed that, unless they acted, they would go bankrupt. Many of them came to see a reduction in their wage bill as a sine qua non for the survival of their operations.

In the last week of May, Samuel Cooper, one of the principal manufacturers, informed his weavers that, in view of the stiff competition he was facing, he intended to reduce the piece rate for drill weaving by about 25 per cent. When news of the impending reduction came to the notice of the general body of weavers, there was widespread anger and alarm. Some manufacturers added fuel to the flame when they let it be known that they would follow Cooper's lead. On Wednesday evening, May 27th, the weavers of Barnsley and the neighbourhood met on May Day Green to discuss the threat to the standard price list. When they met again the next evening, they exhibited signs of greater excitement. After the meeting, a crowd of them, estimated

⁵¹ See Chapter Two above, p.127.

⁵² The Sheffield Courant, May 22, 1829, p.274; The Leeds Mercury, May 16, 1829, p.2; The Leeds Intelligencer, May 14, 1829, p.3.

at 300 marched to Coopers' house to demand his withdrawal of the threatened price reduction. When he refused to come out of the house, some individuals in the crowd threw stones at his house and broke a few windows. He was told that if he reduced the price, his warehouse would be burnt down. He later told a weavers' deputation that he would comply with their demand. On the same evening stones were also thrown at the houses of three other manufacturers.

On the next day, May 29th, the magistrates alerted the Barnsley troop of yeomanry, appointed 150 special constables, and sent for military aid from Major General Bouverie, commander of the Northern District. General Bouverie promptly ordered into Barnsley a detachment of the 9th Lancers from Sheffield. While the forces of law and order were flexing their muscles in preparation for a possible confrontation, the magistrates met a deputation of the weavers together with the principal manufacturers, and tried to reconcile the two sides. The tripartite meeting appointed Messrs. Henry Jackson and Geoffrey Mason, linen manufacturers, to prepare a new price list which would take into account the effects of the depression. The weavers had a few meetings that week-end but there were no incidents. On Sunday, May 31st, the troops withdrew back to Sheffield. No sooner did they depart than fresh trouble ensued. On Monday evening, June 1st, a weavers' deputation went to the Court Room to receive the new price list. When, two hours later, the list was read to a large assembly of weavers on May Day Green, there was dissatisfaction with a few items. The deputation, which was ordered back to the Court Room by the meeting, was escorted by a crowd of about 200 weavers. While their deputation was taking part in the fresh negotiations, the weavers held an excited meeting outside the Court Room. They were addressed by Richard Jackson, a veteran of the Grange Moor Insurrection of 1820. The meeting ignored Dr. Corbett's order to

disperse, whereupon the magistrate read the Riot Act, which measure the weavers also defied. The yeomanry called in to disperse the crowd was pelted with stones. After it finally succeeded in disbanding the meeting, the yeomanry patrolled the streets until after midnight when there was perfect tranquility. On June 2nd the weavers accepted a revised price list. Thomas Murray, the secretary of the weavers' strike committee, wrote to the three magistrates, Dr. Corbett, John Spencer Stanhope and Joseph Beckett, to thank them for their "praiseworthy exertion, kind and conciliatory conduct, patience and forbearance" in handling the dispute.⁵³

The price list of June 2nd was short lived. By the beginning of July some manufacturers were contemplating a further reduction. About midnight on July 1st the house of Joseph Fox, who had given out work at a price below that in the June list, was attacked by a large group of angry weavers. His windows were smashed and his doors broken.⁵⁴ Between July and August more and more manufacturers felt the pinch of the depression; some

⁵³ The story of events from late May to June 2 comes from a variety of sources, but mainly from: The Leeds Mercury, June 6, 1829, p.3; The Leeds Intelligencer, June 4, 1829, p.3.; The Sheffield Courant & Rotherham, Barnsley & Chesterfield Advertiser, June 5, 1829, p.390; The Leeds Patriot, June 6, 1829, p.3; P.R.O., H.O.40/23: Dr. Corbett to Sir Robert Peel, May 30 1829; & Major General Sir Bouverie to Phillips, May 30, 1829; H.O.40/24: Bouverie to Phillips June 2, & June 3, 1829. Dr. Corbett to Sir Robert Peel, June 2, 1829.

⁵⁴ The Leeds Mercury, July 4, 1829, p.3.

laid their men off and a few reduced their piece rates. Every manufacturer was, therefore, rendered insecure and all expressed their intention to put out work at reduced rates. At the beginning of August the magistrates tried to reconcile the masters and their men and managed to get some of the manufacturers to promise that they would abide by the June list. But in the third week of August the weavers received a proposed list which averaged a reduction on the June list of 4s. to 5s. in the Pound. They immediately formed a strike committee to conduct their protest action.⁵⁵

Between August 24th and 27th the weavers held heavily attended public meetings on May Day Green where they were addressed by many local speakers, especially the Irishman Patrick Flanigan, William Ashton and Peter Hoey, and the Englishman Frank Mirfield. The latter three were later to figure prominently in the Chartist movement.⁵⁶ The major theme of all the speeches was to urge the men to stand firm in the struggle against the manufacturers' attempt to erode their unenviable standards of living. On August 24th Patrick Flanigan, the chairman of the strike committee, exhorted the weavers to keep the peace and refrain from breaking the laws; to which William Ashton replied in his speech:

It has been urged by my friend Flanigan
that we should be obedient to the laws.
I am no admirer of the laws, but I shall
be obedient to them and not violate them. ⁵⁷

But with every day that passed, attitudes hardened and tempers frayed.

On August 26th speaker after speaker branded the manufacturers as "a tyrannical set of oppressors." The Irishman Peter Hoey advised the weavers to obey the laws but added a proviso:

⁵⁵ The Leeds Intelligencer, Sept. 4, 1829, p.3.

⁵⁶ See Chapter Nine below.

⁵⁷ The Leeds Mercury, Aug. 29, 1829, p.3.

but I also recommend you not to forget the laws of nature. If the laws of the country are observed, how much more ought they and if the present list of prices are broken, they will be more violated. 58

Another future Chartist, William Ashton, unleashed a wholesale attack on what he termed as 'class legislation', and changed his mind about his earlier pledge to obey the laws:

It has been observed by a particular friend that it is necessary to obey the laws. I should wish to obey them if they were in accordance with my feelings, but they are not. Had that detestable motion for dissecting the bodies of Englishmen been passed into law, would you have obeyed it? (No, no). It would have been the duty of every man to have resisted it by every possible means. There are some laws which I don't approve of. The Corn Law, that monopolizing law, which benefits the landlord and the farmer, and does so much injury to the poor man; ... Look at the law which allows Prince Leopold to receive £50,000 a year, while there are 500 men here that have not a bite of bread. ... My determination is this, before I would die for want of bread, I would exterminate two or three of the tyrants that were the cause of it. 59

Less emotionally and perhaps more tellingly, another future Chartist, Frank Mirfield, told the same meeting:

Low wages not only tend to impoverish and demoralize the labouring class, but to shake the foundation of civil society also, for how can property be said to be safe when millions of hard-working people are in a state of half-starvation?

Mirfield also showed a profound acquaintance with the labour theory of value:

The labouring classes constitute the greatest mass of people in every country; they are the machines that keep it in constant motion; they feed and clothe all the rest, and surely for doing this they are entitled to a belly-full themselves. 60

58 The Leeds Mercury, Aug. 29, 1829, p.3.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

In the midst of all this threatening anonymous letters were sent to many manufacturers. The writing was clearly on the wall. The alarmed magistrates sent for military aid from Major General Sir Bouverie. On the next day the town found itself in what a local annalist has described as "the throes of a revolution".⁶¹

During the morning and early afternoon of Thursday August 27th a deputation of weavers called upon every manufacturer in town to find out how many were willing to pay according to the old price list negotiated in June. The overwhelming majority of the manufacturers intimated that they would substantially reduce the piece-rates. In the evening the weavers assembled on May Day Green and heard the bad news. Indignant speeches were made; some members of the delegation denounced individual manufacturers by their names. The weavers were incensed. When the meeting ended the crowd ran amuck. They set out to administer popular justice against some of the manufacturers who were thought to be instrumental in the reduction of the piece-rates. An estimated five hundred weavers surrounded the houses of Messrs. Cordeux and Coe near the May Day Green and shouted insults at the two manufacturers. When Coe came out to remonstrate with them, he was answered by a volley of stones. His windows and doors were broken, and he and his baby niece were injured.

In the meantime another two hundred weavers proceeded to the home of Thomas Jackson, manufacturer, at Keresforth Hill. Here they engaged in an orgy of destruction. Jackson and his family had gone into timely hiding in an upstairs bed-room. But the damage to his property was considerable. The

⁶¹ Burland, op.cit., p.447.

weavers destroyed the plants in his garden; smashed the windows and doors; destroyed his furniture and crockery; drank his wines and spirits; and set his library of 300 volumes on fire. Jackson's loss was estimated at £500. When the yeomanry and troops arrived on the scene later that evening, the crowd had dispersed. Jackson offered a £200 prize to anyone who would identify the perpetrators of the outrages.

The town was seized with panic. Special constables were sworn in to aid the military who patrolled the town all night. William Ashton was arrested for allegedly inciting the men to riot. Manufacturers and tradesmen employed their warehousemen and servants and armed them to guard their homes and warehouses. Guns, blunderbusses, pistols and swords were secured for personal defence. It is said that on the next day some of the manufacturers sent their families to distant places for their own safety.⁶²

For the next few weeks Barnsley remained in a state of uneasiness. On Friday, August 28th, the magistrates unsuccessfully tried to arbitrate between the two sides. The weavers rejected the new price list.⁶³ In the afternoon William Ashton, in custody for his alleged part in the Keresforth Hill riots, was examined by the magistrates at the King's Head Inn. While Ashton's interrogation was in progress, a large body of weavers assembled at the nearby Market Hill, chanted slogans and hooted and insulted every passer-by they suspected to be against their cause. Ashton was released on bail. He was escorted by the crowd to the May Day

⁶² The Leeds Intelligencer, Sept. 3, 1829, p.3; The Leeds Mercury, Aug.29, 1829, p.3; The Sheffield Iris, Sept. 1, 1829, p.3; Hoyle, op.cit., p.265; Burland, op.cit. p.447; P.R.O., H.O.40/24: Sir Bouverie to J.M.Phillips, Aug. 28, Dr. Corbett to Sir Robert Peel, Aug.29, 1829, & depositions of Thomas Jackson, Ann Redford (Jackson's servant), William Myers, Thomas Liddal and Thomas Parkin.

⁶³ The Sheffield Iris, Sept. 1, 1829, p.3.

Green where a larger body of weavers was anxiously waiting. At the May Day Green meeting the weavers' leader, Flanigan deprecated the riotous events at Keresforth Hill and urged the men to keep the peace.⁶⁴ But the state of unrest prevailed. On the next day Thomas Jackson received an anonymous letter:

Mr. Thomas Jackson, linen manufacturer, Barnsley
- Sir, I am instructed to inform you that your
days are numbered so prepare to meet thy God.
I am yours P.Q.
(P.S.) Your reward of £200 will not save you this
letter stands for Ned an all and Hodgetts to. ⁶⁵

On Monday, August 31, Dr. Corbett attended a large weavers' meeting where he warned them that stiffer action would be taken against violent behaviour. He ordered them not to meet after three o'clock in the afternoons. Two days later a barn leased by Jackson and Hodgetts' firm at Eyming Wood, a mile from Barnsley, was set on fire. Looms and other equipment valued at £400 were destroyed. The soldiers and constables who went to put out the fire were shot at from ambush.⁶⁶

The state of fear intensified. On September 3rd more troops from the 3rd Dragoons at Sheffield were brought in to reinforce the existing forces. A reporter to the Leeds Mercury wrote: "Picquets of soldiers and bodies of constables continue to traverse the town and its immediate neighbourhood each successive night during what is emphatically called 'the reign of terror'".⁶⁷ On September 7th the inhabitants held a public meeting to discuss

⁶⁴ The Leeds Intelligencer, Sept. 3, 1829, p.3.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Hodgetts was Thomas Jackson's partner in the firm "Jackson & Hodgetts.

⁶⁶ The Leeds Mercury, Sept. 5, 1829, p.3; Burland, op.cit., p.447; P.R.O., H.O.40/24: Dr. Corbett to Sir Robert Peel, Sept.3, 1829; depositions of Jackson, Radcliffe, Saxton, Davidson, Hill & Gilbanks - dated Sept. 3, 1829.

⁶⁷ The Leeds Mercury, Sept.5, 1829, p.3. Also: Joseph Beckett to John Spencer Stanhope, Sept.15, 1829: Spencer Stanhope Muniments, Sheffield Central Library, Archives Dept., (hereafter, Sheffield Archives), 60607(5).

the policing of the town. The state of affairs, Dr. Corbett told the meeting, where the town was patrolled by armed troops and the manufacturers armed their servants to guard their property ought not to continue in a civilized country. He called upon the town to create an efficient police force. Although six manufacturers subscribed a handsome £155 towards this purpose, it was generally thought at the meeting that the town could not afford to undertake such a task. A motion suggesting that money should come out of the poor rates was overwhelmingly rejected. The only achievement of the meeting was a resolution calling on the manufacturers and their weavers to meet and settle the dispute.⁶⁸ The proceedings at this meeting would suggest that the weavers enjoyed a good deal of public sympathy. A weavers' meeting, held later in the day repudiated appeals for a compromise. They would not settle for less than the list of June 2nd, which, in any case, was a "famine price." This is how one speaker put it:

Even that which would be considered
injustice towards an African slave is thought
quite right when directed against weavers.
Perhaps there is something in the constitution
of the intellect or character of weavers
which makes them (the manufacturers) consider
this right. Well, it may be so. Perhaps they intend
to make us endure this. If they do, we will not
endure it without complaining; we will not suffer
in silence, nor add to the shame of slavery
the turpitude of enduring it, at least
without shaking our chains, though the noise
of them may ring discordantly in the ears
of our oppressors. Let us then continue to

⁶⁸ The Leeds Mercury, Sept.12, 1829, p.3. The Leeds Intelligencer, Sept.10, 1829, p.3. The magistrates and the Improvement Commissioners had earlier examined the possibility of creating a Police force under the Improvement Act of 1822 (see Chapter 5) but it was found that the Commissioners could not muster the necessary funds: P.R.O.,H.O.40/24: Sir Bouverie to Under Secretary of State, Home Office, Sept.5, & Statement of W.C.Mence, Clerk to the Improvement Commissioners, Sept.5, 1829. Sheffield Archives, Spencer Stanhope Muniments 60607 (3): Dr. Corbett to John Spencer Stanhope, Sept.5, 1829.

meet to discuss our grievances, and to ascertain their cause, and to vindicate our rights. We will publish them to the world through the medium of our meetings, and on the wings of the press. We will appeal to the justice and generosity of our countrymen, for among the manufacturers justice has made an adjournment. (Laughter). 69

The speaker was Richard Jackson, the radical. Such speeches kept most of the weavers in a resolute mood.

When individual weavers began to waver and took out work at a reduced price, thus violating what in weaving circles was known as 'loom law', they incurred the displeasure of the determined strikers. Between September 9th and 11th crowds of weavers remonstrated with three weavers who had taken out work from Messrs. Tee at a reduced price. At the homes of the three weavers in Wilson's Piece there were confrontations between the strikers and the armed warehousemen of Messrs. Tee who guarded the houses. In one of the incidents, when a guard tried to shoot at the attacking weavers, a young boy in an opposite house was seriously injured.⁷⁰

About midday on September 30th six weavers from Dodworth (2 miles from Barnsley) applied for work at a reduced price at the warehouse of Messrs. Jackson and Hodgetts. A crowd of 150 indignant weavers escorted pell-mell from Barnsley to Dodworth the cart of yarn which was guarded by armed constables. Lord Wharncliffe, a magistrate, succeeded in dispersing the crowd without provoking any violence. Later on that evening a weavers'

⁶⁹ The Leeds Mercury, Sept.12, 1829, p.3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Hoyle, op.cit., p.267.

public meeting at Barebones decided to try and prevail on the six Dodworth weavers to give up their work. On the following morning some of the Barnsley militants who went to Dodworth on this mission achieved some success. Only two of the Dodworth weavers, Robert Sykes and Abraham Ingham, refused to give in to the strikers' demand. A weavers' public meeting, held shortly after, decided to capture the yarn from them by force. At about noon a large body of weavers from Barnsley proceeded to Dodworth where they went on the rampage. They invaded the houses of Sykes and Ingham, seized the yarn from their shops and destroyed it on the adjoining fields. The chase carrying Joseph Beckett, the magistrate who had hurried to Dodworth in the company of constables to disperse the crowd, was stoned and its windows broken. It was not until the soldiers arrived that the crowd finally dispersed. About twenty people were arrested in connection with the incident.⁷¹

Between October 5th and 10th the town weavers were engaged in confrontations with more strike breakers from the villages of Cawthorne and Hoylandswaine. On October 9th a weavers' deputation called on John Rhodes of Hoylandswaine and offered him 5s. as first instalment of his strike pay in return for giving up his work. Rhodes would not agree. On the following day he received a threatening letter:

If you do not take back the work which you have taken out, you will bring destruction on yourself. We will give you but a short time to consider, and if you do not comply, we will destroy your house and yourself and family. We have received a large quantity of arms from the grand depot, which will be put in force with a vengeance. ⁷²

⁷¹ The Leeds Mercury, Oct. 3, 1829, p.3; The Leeds Intelligencer, Oct. 1, & 8, pp.3; Hoyle, op.cit., p.272; P.R.O., H.O.40/24: Dr. Corbett to Sir Robert Peel, Oct.10, 1829; Depositions of Flanigan, Best, Sykes, Ingham, Mitchell, Brien, Connally, Walton, Jackson & Hilton.

⁷² Hoyle, op.cit., p. 272. See also The Sheffield Iris, Oct. 13, 1829, p.3.

Earlier on October 8th and 9th there had been other clashes in town between the strikers on the one hand and the strike-breakers on the other. On the former date the house of James Bradshaw, a strike-breaker who lived in Wilson's Piece, was attacked. On the following day, while a crowd of about 300 weavers were returning from a meeting, they met a cart-load of yarn on New Street bound for the home of a weaver named Smith. Attempts were made to seize the cart but soon the military was on the spot. Stones were hurled at the soldiers and a shot was fired. The Riot Act was read and seven arrests were made. Other strike-breakers were harrassed by small bands of men who pelted them with stones ^{and} shouted abuses at them.⁷³

With most of the strike leaders under arrest, however, more and more weavers wavered. Those from the villages were increasingly taking out work and, one by one, the town weavers also applied for work. By the beginning of November the newspapers were reporting that the strike had virtually come to an end; the weavers had gone back to work on the employers' terms.⁷⁴ The Leeds Mercury commented that, compared to the rates of pay in 1815, the weavers were now getting 40 per cent less.⁷⁵ In fact, not all the weavers could get work because the trade was still depressed. Ten of the town's twenty nine manufacturers emerged from the conflict as bankrupt men.⁷⁶

Among the strikers, the casualty rate was also high. Apart from those who could not obtain work, there were others who were captured by 'the long arm of the law'. On October 13th five strikers were sentenced to three months imprisonment at the Barnsley Petty Session, three for using threatening language against their fellow workmen and two for their part in the Wilson's Piece riots.⁷⁷ At the end of October, during the Sheffield Michaelmas

⁷³ Hoyle, op.cit., p.273. The Leeds Intelligencer, Oct.15, 1829, p.3.
The Sheffield Courant, Oct.16, 1829, p.3.

⁷⁴ The Leeds Intelligencer, Nov.5, 1829, p.3; The Leeds Mercury, Nov.7, 1829, p.3; P.R.O., H.O.40/24: Lord Wharncliffe to Sir Robert Peel Nov.3, 1829.

⁷⁵ The Leeds Mercury, Nov.7, 1829, p.3.

⁷⁶ Jos. Wilkinson, "Barnsley Local History" (MSS. & Cuttings, B.R.L.), p.120.

⁷⁷ The Sheffield Courant, Oct.16, 1829, p.3.

Sessions, five men were found guilty of taking part in the New Street riots. When the verdict was announced, the Barnsley spectators who crowded the court-room shouted down the bench. The prisoners were later sentenced to various periods of hard labour at Wakefield.⁷⁸ The Keresforth Hill and Dodworth rioters were tried at the York Assizes on March 30th and April 7th 1830 respectively. The evidence against the Keresforth Hill rioters was inadequate, but three of the Dodworth rioters were imprisoned for periods varying from three to twelve months. The other two, William Ashton and Frank Mirfield, were sentenced to 14 years' transportation.⁷⁹ The violent and protracted struggle, which among the patriarchs of the town had earned the weavers the reputation of a pugnacious race, ended in a shattering defeat. The germane questions at this juncture are: why was the struggle violent and protracted and why was it finally subdued?

Many manufacturers, together with the magistrates and some sections of the West Riding press, convinced themselves that the militancy and violence which characterized the 1829 strikes were in a large measure the work of 'strangers', especially the Irish immigrants and some Lancashire 'delegates'.⁸⁰ The moral support given by delegate weavers from Lancashire

⁷⁸ Hoyle, op.cit., p.274; The Leeds Mercury, Oct. 31, 1829, p.3.

⁷⁹ Hoyle, op.cit., p.278; The Leeds Mercury, Ap.10, 1830, p.3. Both Ashton and Mirfield returned to Barnsley in 1838 and 1840 respectively, to take a leading part in Chartism.

⁸⁰ P.R.O., H.O.40/23: Dr. Corbett to Sir Robert Peel, May 30, 1829; H.O.40/24: General Bouverie to Phillips, June 2 & Dr. Corbett to Peel, June 2, 1829.

was important for the morale of the turnouts, but its impact on the conduct of the strike is bound to have been minimal. There is no doubt that the presence of the Irish in these disputes was considerable. Irishmen like Patrick Flanigan, Peter Hoey, William Ashton or Thomas Murray played a leading role in the strikes and contributed to the fiery oratory that kept the embers of conflict burning. But considering that the strike was general throughout the town and the neighbourhood, and that among the English weavers were also outstanding strike leaders and orators, most of the talk about Irish influence was nothing more than a xenophobic reaction to the presence of the Irish in the town. In fact, compared to such English firebrands as Richard Jackson or Frank Mirfield, the Irish strike leader Patrick Flanigan was a restraining influence on the strikers. The conduct of the strike cannot validly be attributed to any particular section of the weaving community - ethnic or otherwise.

It seems that the resolve and violence with which the weavers responded to the threat of wage reductions are largely attributable to the seriousness of the trade crisis and the suffering which it engendered. By the time the wage reductions came, hundreds of weavers were already out of employment, unable even to avail themselves of parochial relief. Large-scale social discontent prevailed, constituting as it did a potentially explosive atmosphere. The extremely drastic wage reductions provided the spark. In many ways the weavers' strikes and riots were acts of desperation. It would be a mistake, however, to view the weavers' action purely and simply as blind 'hunger riots'. After all, there were periods of hardship, before and since, but they were not characterized by such violent conflict. Consideration must also be given to mediating factors some of which may not be so amenable to historical inquiry. One important factor was the leadership.

The columns of the contemporary press are full of moving oratory from young men who later became local Chartist leaders. They addressed their audience not only on their rights to a decent wage but also on how their plight was a product of their manipulation by the whole establishment, economic as well as political.⁸¹ Their arguments were compelling, their fervour and oratory bestirring. It is important to point out that the outrages were directed against specific targets which fell into two categories: notorious manufacturers who were suspected or known by the weavers to have instigated the cuts in the piece-rates, and 'blacksheep' or 'deviant' weavers who by taking out work at reduced prices had violated 'loom law'.⁸²

The question as to why the weavers' struggles of 1829 failed has a ready answer. They could not possibly have won in a depression of such magnitude. Their masters, under pressure of diminishing orders, were not able to meet their wage demands. That ten out of twenty-nine manufacturing businesses folded up that year is eloquent testimony to the catastrophe that befell the linen industry. In their turn, the weavers were (to use a hackneyed phrase) starved into submission. Since the withdrawal of the wage cuts was not forthcoming, and since their use of force met the determined action of the forces of law and order, they could not hold out indefinitely. Although financial support for the strikes came from weavers' weekly subscriptions in Leeds, Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Bradford,⁸³ such

⁸¹ The Leeds Mercury, Sept.12, 1829, p.3, especially Jackson's speech.

⁸² See Eric J. Hobsbawm, "The Machine Breakers," Labouring Men, op.cit., pp.7-9 where the author argues that the riot was a means of exerting pressure on employers and of "ensuring the essential solidarity of the workers."

⁸³ The Sheffield Iris, Oct.27, 1829, p.3.

support was not enough. The whole country was in a depression and among workmen everywhere money as well as employment were extremely short. The end of the 1829 conflict marked the end of a distinct phase in the history of the weavers' strikes; henceforward the riot disappeared from the weavers' industrial action.

VI: The 1830's: Period of Uneasy Peace:

The linen industry took a long time to recover from the trauma of the depression and the strikes of 1829. A slow upward movement began early in 1830 but was arrested by a mild recession in 1832-33. It was not until 1834 that there were reports of ample employment; old hands who had deserted the town during the lean years, were now, slowly but surely, coming back.⁸⁴ Since at the end of the 1829 strikes the weavers had individually capitulated to the manufacturers' terms, the standard price list had, in effect, gone overboard. It was restored by the boom of 1835-36 when the linen trade was said to be "in a state of unprecedented briskness" and when, for the first time in many years, there was a shortage of labour.⁸⁵

In response to the weavers' protest many manufacturers who were paying lower rates raised them in October 1835, thus reinstating the system of paying according to the standard price list which for more than five years had existed only in name.⁸⁶ In January 1836 the weavers, through the Committee of their Association, presented a new price list to the manufacturers

⁸⁴ The Leeds Mercury, June 14, 1834, p.5.

⁸⁵ See Chapter Two, Section IV above.

⁸⁶ The Leeds Times, Oct. 17, 1835, p.3.

for consideration. The list was in effect an application for an advance in pay. With negligible modifications, the manufacturers adopted the new list.⁸⁷ Consequent upon the weavers' successes, workers in many other trades applied for advances in their wages; some even backed their claims with industrial action. Between April and July 1836 strikes were either threatened or actually carried out among joiners, stone-masons, colliers and shoe-makers.⁸⁸ As the boom surged, the weavers' desire to partake of this prosperity was sharpened. In June 1836 the fancy weavers of Charles Tee struck work for a week in protest against their master's refusal to grant a requested wage increase. Within a matter of days Tee agreed to advance his workmen 6d. to 2s. 6d. per piece,⁸⁹ thus opening the gate for a general wage demand in the town.⁹⁰ Few manufacturers gave in; most of them, however, resented the idea of a second increase in less than a year. On September 30th a manufacturers' meeting considered the weavers' application for an increase but, after a long debate, emerged with a negative reply signed by 24 of them:

Upon a careful review of the present prospect of the trade this meeting is of opinion an advance upon the list of wages agreed in January last would be highly detrimental to the manufacturing interests of the town. ⁹¹

The weavers were unyielding. In November they submitted another application for a rise.⁹² It was hardly an opportune moment, for in less than a month the hard times began. Early in December some manufacturers complained that orders from America had considerably diminished.⁹³ As

⁸⁷ The Leeds Mercury, Jan. 16, 1836, p.5; Report on the Handloom Weavers (1840) op.cit., p. 447.

⁸⁸ The Leeds Mercury, Ap.30, July 9 & July 23, 1836, pp.5. The story of the long strike of the shoe makers is told in collection of clippings: British Library, Place Coll. Set 51, F.209.

⁸⁹ The Leeds Mercury, June 11, 1836, p.8.

⁹⁰ Ibid., June 18, 1836, p.6.

⁹¹ Ibid., Oct. 1, 1836, p.5.

⁹² Ibid., Nov.26, 1836, p.5.

⁹³ Ibid., Dec.10, 1836, p.5.

we have seen elsewhere most of 1837 was nothing but distress. The machinery of relief, official as well as private, failed to cope with it.⁹⁴ Non-resident unemployed weavers applied for passes to return to their parishes of origin.⁹⁵ As the manufacturers' volume of business slipped further back, they sought to reduce the piece rates.

The idea of reducing the rates was first put forward by Thomas Taylor, one of the principal manufacturers. The weavers' reaction was characteristic. They held a public meeting on August 14th 1837. In an address to the manufacturers, signed by Peter Hoey, their Association's chairman, the weavers told their masters:

Gentlemen, at a public meeting of your own body held in 1836, we find you came to the following resolution: "That any advance upon the January list would be highly detrimental to the manufacturing interests of the town." Now, gentlemen, on Monday 14th of August 1837, the weavers of this town and neighbourhood held a public meeting and upon a similar feeling to that which prompted you in 1836, they resolved that a reduction in weavers' wages would be highly detrimental to the interests of the working men, and no permanent advantage to the employers. ...

The meeting elected six of its members, including the famous Peter Hoey and John Vallance, to petition their masters against the threatened reduction. When 2 days later the deputation brought back a negative reply from the manufacturers, the weavers expressed great disappointment. "Every reduction in our wages," ran their first resolution, "tends to promote the competition among the manufacturers, creating the necessity for repeated reductions, and ought therefore to be avoided." They vowed to lend support to any of their

⁹⁴ See Chapter Four above, p.225.

⁹⁵ The Leeds Times, June 3, 1837, p.5.

members thrown out of employment for resisting the wage cuts.⁹⁶ It was a veiled threat of industrial action. In their turn the manufacturers issued their own threat based on the law of Master and Servant. They published copies of hand-bills entitled 'Notice':

Any man who shall by violence, threats and intimidation, molestation or obstruction, do or endeavour to do any of these things below enumerated, may be sent to the treadmill for 3 months:

1. Forcing or attempting to force any workman to depart from his hiring before the end of the term for which he is hired or to return work in an unfinished state.
2. Preventing, or endeavouring to prevent any workman from being himself or going back to work.
3. Compelling or endeavouring to compel any person to belong to any club or union, or to contribute money, or to pay any fines to any club or union because he did not comply with the rules or orders of any club or union.
4. Forcing or endeavouring to force any master to alter his mode of carrying on his business. 97

When the new list of prices came out, the weavers were apparently taken by surprise. At a large public meeting on August 23rd John Vallance complained that the reduction in the piece rates was much greater than they "had reason to expect." They had anticipated, he said, a maximum cut of 5 per cent; but now it was about 12 per cent. The weavers unanimously resolved never to accept the new price list.⁹⁸ But only two days later the manufacturers succeeded in persuading the weavers to return to work on the promise that the piece-rates would be raised when trade improved.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Ibid., Aug.19, 1837, pp.4-5.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.5.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Aug.26, 1837, p.5.

⁹⁹ Ibid., Sept.2, 1837, p.5.

When in Autumn 1838 the industrial situation improved, the weavers tried to reap the fruits of the trade revival. In mid-November they petitioned their masters for the reinstatement of the list of January 1836. The negotiations between the two sides resulted not in the list of January 1836 but in a slight advance on the current rates.¹⁰⁰ Not all the manufacturers adhered to this latest list, however, and the depression which began in 1839 led to the reinstatement of the reduced list of 1837.

The 1830's were characterized by a conspicuous absence of the violent and long-drawn-out pitched battles which marked the strikes of 1818, 1823, and 1829. Disputes arose but they were quickly settled. The weavers attained a measure of success, especially in 1835-36. In the next two decades the linen industry struggled for survival against many odds. Under those conditions, frequent wage reductions, or attempts at wage reductions, were inevitable. The period was therefore marked with numerous disputes in the industry. Most of them were partial rather than general (though invariably the whole weaving community tended to get involved). Like those of the 1830's, but unlike those of the previous period, these disputes were largely free from riotous conduct.

¹⁰⁰ Hoyle, op.cit., CLVI.

VII: The Scattered Battles of the 1840's and 1850's:

Four major influences were brought to bear upon the frequency and character of the linen disputes after 1840. The first was a series of depressions which afflicted the industry: in 1839-43, 1847-48 and 1854-57. The second was the secular decline of linen production in Barnsley as a result of the competition partly of cotton and partly of the Irish and Scotch linens, produced under conditions of relatively cheap labour. The third was the rise of power-loom linen production in the early 1840's.¹⁰¹ Finally was the organizational drive reactivated by the Barnsley weavers in 1844.

During the trade crises, when both the orders and the cloth prices were low, the manufacturers not only issued little or no work but as often as not attempted to reduce wages in order either to maintain their profit margins or to minimize their losses. The long-term decline of linen production in Barnsley implied two things. First, that in the face of cheap cottons and linen fabrics produced elsewhere the Barnsley manufacturers had perforce to sell their products at competitive prices. One of the means to this end was to reduce their labour costs. Secondly, that there was bound to be a reserve army of unemployed or underemployed linen workers, a factor which tended to depress the level of earnings among those in employment.

In our period power-loom weaving was employed by only a minority of the manufacturers. But because of the high productivity accruing from this innovation, these manufacturers occupied an important and influential position in the trade. Hitherto, the organization in the industry had

¹⁰¹ See Chapter Two above.

been more or less uniform throughout, with all the employers putting out work, albeit on different scales, to their hand-loom weavers. But the power-loom was an agent of differentiation. On the one hand were large factory owners like Thomas Taylor and Sons who not only combined this kind of operation with the putting out system but also engaged cheap female and juvenile labour. On the other, were small, capital-starved putters-out, unable to reap any benefits of either scale or mechanization. It was difficult under such conditions to maintain a uniform price list. Both the large factory owners and the small putters-out sought to reduce the piece-rates, but not for the same reasons. The power-loom manufacturer thought that his considerable investment in expensive machinery entitled him to a reduction in his labour costs. For his part, the small putter-out was pushed to the wall by the large manufacturer who enjoyed the economies of scale and mechanization. He therefore sought to reduce the piece rates to avoid being undersold at the emporiums. The jacquard loom was an additional, though lesser, element of differentiation. It facilitated specialization in the more lucrative patterned fabrics. By and large the manufacturers ceased to act as a single body in their wages policy. They operated largely on individual initiative as circumstances dictated.

Although both the jacquard and power-looms acted as centrifugal forces, having created new classes of better paid minority weavers, the weaving community tended to fight together to maintain their rates of pay. The Barnsley Linen Weavers' Association for the Protection of Wages, created in 1844, proved a lasting instrument in the attempts to achieve this goal. Nominally the price list of August 1837 was the standard to which all members of the trade were supposed to adhere to till December 1853 when some modifications were effected. But almost every manufacturer departed from the list at one time or another. On every such occasion the weavers'

response was usually prompt. Although the power-loom weavers had their own standard piece-rates negotiated in 1846 and estimated at less than half those in the hand-loom trade, they joined battle on many occasions along with the hand-loom weavers. A dispute involving the weavers of one manufacturer usually provoked response from the whole weaving community, for, to them, a violation of the price list by one employer heralded a general reduction in the piece rates. Petitioning of the manufacturers concerned and financial aid to those on strike constituted the weavers' major strategy. The days of the riot were gone, and gone for ever. In many of these disputes the weavers claimed some victories, but not without some cost. In times of trade depressions many employers preferred giving out little or no work to paying relatively high piece rates. The harrowing experience of the unemployed weavers during the trade depressions has already been told.¹⁰²

In the early 1840's the Barnsley weavers as a body encouraged and supported strikes against individual manufacturers who either reduced piece rates or issued warps which were longer than the stipulated size. In May 1841, when Taylor's firm decided to make drills five yards longer than the town standard without accordingly raising the piece rates, three other manufacturers threatened to follow suit. Appreciating the danger which this implied, the whole body of weavers held a public meeting at which they condemned Messrs. Taylor's action, called on the firm's weavers to strike work, and pledged themselves to supporting the strike through weekly subscriptions. The strike, which lasted three months, ended in the

¹⁰² Supra: Chapters Two and Four.

weavers' victory.¹⁰³ Between February and December 1843 the weavers were involved in strikes against three manufacturers. Haxworth and Carnley who reduced the piece rates for tick weaving in February provoked a strike which was supported by all the weavers and ended as late as November.¹⁰⁴ A new firm, Norris, Brady and Company, which started production in August, paid rates which were below the town standard. The general body of weavers prevailed upon the firm's hands to strike work until their employers agreed to pay them according to the standard list. The strike lasted only a few days, the new firm having consented to adhering to the general price list.¹⁰⁵ From December 1843 to well into 1844 the weavers supported a strike against William Peckett, who had reduced wages for all his weavers. Although in 1844 the weavers had disputes with about ten other manufacturers, the strike against Peckett was the bitterest and lasted longest. The controversial Peckett is alleged to have spurned on a number of occasions weavers' deputations which went to see him about the dispute. Weekly meetings, numerous attended, were held to rally support for the strike and financial aid was generously given. In February the weavers decided at a public meeting to increase the strike subscription from 2d. to 3d. per loom per week. Financial support also arrived from Leeds and Knaresborough. It was not until May, however, that Peckett was forced to yield to the weavers.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.177 & 179.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.209, 213, 216, 218; The Halifax Guardian, Feb.25, Sept.16, Sept.23, Sept.30 & Nov.5, 1844; The Northern Star, May 15, Dec.2, 1843.

¹⁰⁵ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.215; The Halifax Guardian, Sept.2, & Sept.16, 1843.

¹⁰⁶ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.218, 220-224, 226f; The Northern Star, Feb.24, May 4, 1844; The Leeds Times, Jan.24, Mar.2, Mar.9, Mar.16, 1844; The Sheffield Iris, Mar.14, 1844.

In May and June 1844, as more and more manufacturers resorted to either the reduction of piece-rates or the increase of warp length, thus appearing to precipitate a general reduction in the price list, the Barnsley weavers were alarmed. They found their salvation in an organizational drive which they launched early in June. On June 10th a weavers' public meeting chaired by John Vallance unanimously passed Frank Mirfield's motion to reactivate the old weavers' union which from the late 1830's had been slumbering partly under the shadow of Chartist activities. Within a day the Barnsley Linen Weavers' Association for the Protection of Wages could claim a paid-up membership of 400.¹⁰⁷ Between then and the end of the year the Committee of the Association prevailed upon a number of manufacturers to adhere to the price list and the standard warp length.¹⁰⁸ When William Vallance, son of the veteran radical, was dismissed from employment in June for refusing to weave at a reduced price, the Weavers' Association resolved to open a subscription for his support "to save him from martyrdom and to show to his late employer that the working men are determined to stand by those who advocate their rights."¹⁰⁹ In December the Weavers' Committee decided to circulate the town list of prices to all the householders so that everyone in the trade "might know what was and how to demand their right."¹¹⁰

In the next three years the linen trade enjoyed some prosperity and, consequently, few manufacturers dissented from the standard price list.

¹⁰⁷ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.230f. The Northern Star, June 15, 1844.

¹⁰⁸ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.231 & 237; The Halifax Guardian, June 15 & Dec. 7, 1844.

¹⁰⁹ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.231.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.237; The Leeds Times, Dec.28, 1844, p.8.

Disputes were limited to only a few cases. In February 1845 there was disagreement about the price for weaving fancy hollands, a product newly introduced; it was quickly settled.¹¹¹ In April the Weavers' Association published an appeal "to the linen manufacturers, clergy, gentry and the lovers of Justice in general" in which they sought to express their three main grievances; 1) the lack of uniformity in the payment of wages caused by dishonorable masters who sought to undersell the honourable ones; 2) the issuing by many employers of warps which were longer than the agreed standard, and 3) the enormous trouble and expense which some weavers incurred in having to buy reeds and gears, which loom accessories ought, in justice, to have been freely supplied by the manufacturers.¹¹² When Pigott and Newton reduced the wages of their power-loom weavers in July 1846 the whole weaving population, factory as well as domestic, decided to support a strike against them. When, in September, the strike ended in the weavers' favour, the power-loom weavers, who had hitherto remained apathetic towards unionization, decided to form an Association which worked in close collaboration with the larger Association dominated by the hand weavers and was, apparently, eventually absorbed by it.¹¹³ In November 1847 the Weavers' Committee successfully applied to the magistrates for summonses against manufacturers who had refused to pay full wages on the pretext that their men's work was shoddy.¹¹⁴ In 1848 when the industry was depressed, some manufacturers attempted to reduce wages but met with determined resistance from the whole

¹¹¹ The Northern Star, Feb.22, 1845, p.5.

¹¹² Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.246f.

¹¹³ The Northern Star, July 11, July 18, Sept.12, pp.5.

¹¹⁴ The Leeds Times, Nov.27, 1847, p.8.

body of weavers.¹¹⁵ In 1850 and 1851 the Weavers' Association defended the power-loom weavers of Pigott and Company and the hand weavers of Messrs. Tee and Son against wage cuts.¹¹⁶ In all these cases the Association would send a deputation to argue it out with the employers in question.

In 1852 there was one major dispute involving Messrs. M'Lintock and Company, owners of a large hand-loom weaving shed at Old Mill. In January the firm introduced a daily rate at 10s. a week to replace the town's standard piece-rate system. Their weavers believed that the change was intended to reduce their wages. At a weavers' public meeting on January 27th M'Lintock's weavers argued that for 10s. they produced what other weavers wove for at least 13s. 8d. under the standard list of prices. A deputation went to see the proprietors of the firm but the latter were unyielding. A strike consequently ensued. In May, when attempts to negotiate ^a solution failed, the Weavers' Committee issued hand-bills calling for public support of the M'Lintock strike. The appeal specifically called on "the trading and shopkeeping public" to lend their support to the struggle. The Committee appointed a number of people to collect strike money from the public. At the end of May the strike was reported to have terminated in a "mutual agreement."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Feb.19, 1848, p.8.

¹¹⁶ The Leeds Mercury, Aug.3, 1850, p.10; Idem., Aug.16, 1851, p.10. The Mercury claimed, however, that support for the strike against Tee and Son was minimal.

¹¹⁷ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.370; The Sheffield Free Press, Jan.31, May 22 & May 29, 1852.

In 1853 the linen trade experienced considerable prosperity as well as a good deal of labour disputes. Labour's struggles in linen centred on three fronts. First were the scattered strikes and other forms of protest either against wage cuts or, mostly, against the issuing by manufacturers of warps longer than the town standard. Secondly was the strike of the bleachers of Robert Craik in protest against the employment of children in the bleachworks. Lastly was the moderately successful effort on the part of all the weavers to increase their piece-rates.

In March the power-loom sheeting weavers of Carter Brothers struck work when the firm turned down their application to be paid according to the standard list.¹¹⁸ Early in April three of the strikers were imprisoned for allegedly neglecting their work. On April 9 a large weavers' meeting condemned both Carter Brothers and the magistrates for their "shameful conduct" in sending the three weavers to prison. The meeting unanimously promised to work for the men's liberation. A delegate was named and immediately dispatched to Manchester to seek the legal advice of W.P. Roberts, the "Miners' Attorney". During subsequent days subscriptions were raised for the legal battle. The controversy ended within the month of April, but the sources are silent as to how it ended.¹¹⁹

On April 15 the linen bleachers at Robert Craik's Old Mill Bleach Works came out on strike in protest against the employment of children in the different departments of the bleach works. The bleachers interpreted their employer's resort to juvenile labour as a first step in reducing their wages and eventually replacing their labour. All the town's bleachers

¹¹⁸ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.432; The Leeds Mercury, Ap.9, 1853, p.10.

¹¹⁹ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, 432f; The Sheffield Free Press, Ap.16, 1853, p.8.

lent their support to the strike. At a meeting in their 'committee room' in the White Bear Inn¹²⁰ workers from all the bleachworks in the Barnsley district resolved on May 23 to continue supporting the strike until Craik promised to employ no more child labour and to pay his bleachers as much as Messrs. Taylor and Son paid at their Redbrook Bleach Works.¹²¹ Other linen workers, including the weavers, do not seem to have participated in the dispute.

About mid-May John Hirst, chairman of the Weavers' Association posted bills in the different streets of the town announcing his intention to call a weavers' meeting to consider applying for a reinstatement of the list of prices negotiated in January 1836 and killed by the depression of 1837. In view of the current prosperity of the trade, the hand-bill explained, an application for an advance in wages would be entirely justified.¹²² The weavers' public meeting, attended by about 2,000 of them from the town and its environs, took place on May Day Green on Monday May 30th. Frank Mirfield, the chairman, argued that in view of the general rise of wages granted in the different trades throughout the land, the weavers of Barnsley were entitled to an increase as well. The current list, he said had been drawn "when the country was in a most distressed state - when the overseer was paymaster, for stone breaking." The meeting approved a resolution to request the manufacturers to restore the list of 1836 for hand weaving and to

¹²⁰ which would probably suggest that the bleachers had a local union. (On the other hand it might have been an ad hoc strike committee).

¹²¹ The Leeds Mercury, May 28 1853, p.10; The Sheffield Free Press, Ap.16, May 28, 1853; Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.433 & 438.

¹²² Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.438; The Leeds Mercury, May 21, 1853, p.10; The Sheffield Free Press, May 21, 1853, p.5.

increase the rates of the power-loom weavers by 10 per cent. It was also decided that the weavers would send deputations to their respective employers to petition for the rise.¹²³ On the next day the weavers met again to hear the manufacturers' replies. The linen masters had manifested a diversity of opinion. Some had expressed their willingness to grant the increase, some wanted to confer with their fellow manufacturers before reaching a decision, and a considerable number had categorically stated that they could not afford an increase.¹²⁴ The weavers' meeting consequently instructed Thomas Dixon, the Association's secretary, to get in touch with Joseph Canter, secretary of the Manufacturers' Protective Association, and arrange a meeting between representatives of both sides.¹²⁵

The meeting between the 40 weavers' representatives and the deputation from the Manufacturers' Protective Association took place at the Royal Hotel on June 7th. The manufacturers explained that though the trade enjoyed relative prosperity, the prospects for the future were uncertain and that any increase granted was not likely to last more than three months. In fact, they said, the power-loom weavers were likely to suffer a reduction soon.¹²⁶ After the deliberations which lasted no less than three hours, the two sides arrived at a compromise. The manufacturers would continue to pay according to the list of 1837 and issue a uniform warp length of 110 yards, or pay a proportionate compensation for any excess length. The two sides would meet again on December 1st to draw up a revised list of prices which would satisfy both sides.¹²⁷ The weavers were none too pleased with the results

¹²³ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.439; The Sheffield Free Press, June 4, 1853, p.5.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid. The series of correspondence between Dixon and Canter is in Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.440f.

¹²⁶ The Sheffield Free Press, June 11, 1853, p.8.

¹²⁷ Ibid., Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.442; The Leeds Mercury, June 11, 1853, p.10. It seems that by implication the power-loom weavers were going to be paid according to the list of 1846.

but they found comfort in the fact that the manufacturers had promised to end their violations of the 1837 list of prices.

Consequent upon the agreement of June 7th the Weavers' Committee visited every warping mill in the town and, on the authority of the different manufacturers, checked the measuring tapes used in the mills. They published the results in a hand-bill. "We congratulate you", wrote the chairman of the Weavers' Committee, "upon the fact that 110 yards is again acknowledged by the manufacturers to be the standard length of warps made in Barnsley; and we conjure you in the name of everything you hold dear never to allow that monstrous evil and giant fraud - long lengths without payment - to creep on (sic) again." He exhorted every weaver to join the Association, for "nothing great or permanently good can be achieved without union and brotherly love." Mr. Hirst advised his fellow members to report any violations of the current agreement to the Committee who would then deal with it promptly.¹²⁸

Complaints were not wanting. The power-loom weavers of both William Taylor and John Pigott successfully struck work to be paid according to the list of 1846.¹²⁹ Some weavers accused their masters of failing to pay them for extra lengths of warps. One such case against Messrs. Fletcher and Company turned out to be a melodramatic incident. On Tuesday November 1st a bellman sent by the Weavers' Committee, went round the town to announce that the warp issued by Fletcher and Company, notorious for their constant violation of the June agreement, would be measured publicly on Market Hill, at seven o'clock that evening. A concourse of 500 weavers assembled at the appointed time and place. The warp was accordingly measured in their presence; it extended

¹²⁸ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.444f.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.443; The Sheffield Free Press, June 25, 1853, p.5.

from the top to the bottom of Market Hill and measured 112 yards, that is, two yards longer than the town standard. The weavers then moved to the nearby Corn Exchange where they held a meeting, chaired by the indomitable Frank Mirfield. The meeting accused Fletcher and Company of a breach of confidence, and resolved to apply to the magistrates for a summons against the firm, unless the proprietors promised never again to violate the June agreement. When a weavers' deputation met Fletcher and Company, the latter expressed their displeasure with the public exposure on Market Hill but promised to issue warps of standard length.¹³⁰

On November 30th the weavers held a public meeting to prepare themselves for their long awaited encounter with their masters on the following day, when the general price list was due for review. They elected 30 delegates to negotiate on their behalf. The delegation was instructed to press for a 10 per cent increase on all fabrics, except for huckabacks, narrow diapers and plain unions on which the weavers sought a rise of 15 per cent. The deputation would report back to the general meeting which reserved the right to take the final decision as to whether or not to accept the manufacturers' offer.¹³¹ The meeting between the representatives of the two sides on December 1st was adjourned to give ample time to the manufacturers to prepare the new price lists.¹³² The manufacturers delivered the new list to the weavers' deputation on December 15. On the same evening the weavers' general meeting discussed it in what was described as a heated debate. Although many of them were of the opinion that the increase was too little, the influential members of the Weavers' Committee persuaded the meeting to adopt the price list, explaining that, under the circumstances, the list (later

¹³⁰ The Leeds Mercury, Nov.5, 1853, p.11.

¹³¹ Ibid., Dec.3, 1853, p.10.

¹³² Ibid., Dec.10, 1853, p.11.

referred to as the 'cheese and butter list') was the best they could negotiate.¹³³

It would appear that the weavers' December gains, though believed to have been very limited, prompted the bleachers also to apply for a wage increase at the end of the year. Besides asking for more money, they demanded a ten-hour day as well. On January 10th 1854, when their delegation was spurned by the master bleachers, they gave a week's notice to strike work. But the strike lasted only a week at the end of which the master bleachers made some limited concessions.¹³⁴

As the linen industry smarted under the impact of the Crimean war, which led to very high yarn prices, the weavers' standards of living were seriously eroded. Hundreds lost their jobs and some of those lucky enough to retain them faced wage cuts. Many weavers, therefore, found themselves in the midst of yet another round of wage disputes. Weavers of certain categories of fabrics, especially drills and damasks, were singularly vulnerable. In 1854 the drill weavers of Messrs. Harvey and Company, and all the town's weavers of 8-qr damasks were engaged in wage disputes.¹³⁵ Early in 1855 Harvey and Company reduced rates again for their drill weavers. They argued that they could not compete with Messrs. Taylor and Son who manufactured drills by power. But a settlement was soon reached.¹³⁶

¹³³ Ibid., Dec.17, 1853, p.11.

¹³⁴ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.477, 485-487.

¹³⁵ The Sheffield Free Press, July 1, July 15, 1854.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Mar. 3, 1855, p.3.

In January 1855 George Savage, an undertaker who employed damask weavers, reduced the piece rates. Savage defended the measure by pointing out that, since some manufacturers had started producing damask by power, he could not possibly compete with them. In February Pigott and Company cut the rates of their power-loom tick weavers by 20 per cent in order, they explained, to equalize their rates with those paid by their competitors in Leeds. But Pigott's weavers maintained that, on the basis of their own evidence from Leeds, they were earning considerably less. The weavers of both Pigott and Company, and George Savage went on strike to resist the wage cuts. The strikes were supported not only by the Weavers' Association but by the different trade organizations in Sheffield as well. There were reports of individuals breaking the strike, and the evidence suggests that by May most of the turnouts had gone back to work, probably on the employers' terms.¹³⁷

Insignificant intermittent disputes ensued over the rest of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, but the strikes and lockouts of August 1872 to March 1873, over the power-loom weavers' claim for a 15 per cent increase, in wages came as a finishing blow. After the dispute linen production in Barnsley quickly faded into insignificance. All the power-loom weavers,

¹³⁷ Ibid., Feb.17, Mar.3, Ap.21, May 5 & Sept. 15, 1855; The Barnsley Times, Ap.21 & May 12, 1855, pp.2.

except for those in the employment of Messrs. Taylor and Son, were involved. About £5,350 was given out in strike pay. The money came from different categories of workers in Barnsley (especially the miners) and other parts of the West Riding. The dispute, settled by an arbitration tribunal which awarded the weavers an increase of only 5 per cent, was the climax of the antipathy between the two sides of the linen industry. The mutual ill-feeling was revealed in the ferocity of the campaign against one another in the contemporary press. Reminiscing the history of the disputes in the linen trade, Thomas Tee, a manufacturer, wrote in the columns of the Barnsley Times:

Strikes and unions are not novelties in Barnsley. Its trade has been driven away through their baneful influences during many years of ignorant, dogged resistance to progress. The policy of inaction and dishonest work is not new to your experience, and you have had your Saint Mondays and Tuesdays and the debaucheries of Saturdays and Sundays always. Certain frantic fools, the predecessors of our present strikers, during one of their efforts to drive away the trade, kept my father who was town constable that year, out on police duty for months of nights, and caused the soldiery to be quartered on the inhabitants. They burnt Jackson's barn and fired at one of its owners. ... Men so reckless, so idle and yet so violent, and so dishonest as many of them notoriously were would not compete with the orderly frugal, industrious people of Scotland and Ulster. ...

As the following extract illustrates, the weavers' rejoinder was characteristically unrepentant, not to say pertinent:

Rolling in luxury, knowing no want, feeling in body only ennui, having every desire of the mind or body gratified, revelling in those refinements that please the eye or delight the ear, how can you feel sympathy for or judge rightly a weaver? 138

¹³⁸ Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Local History," (MSs. & press clippings, B.R.L.), pp.107-125.

VIII. Emerging Themes:

Most of the disputes in the linen trade were about pay, especially the piece rates. Only very rarely did any other issues emerge. The rent was such an issue but, as we saw, it is possible to view it in the context of a struggle against the erosion of living standards. In 1840 the weavers of Messrs. Taylor complained of having to queue up in the cold while waiting for their pay.¹³⁹ In 1845 the Weavers' Association complained, among other things, of the expenses they incurred in finding loom accessories which ought to have been supplied free of charge by the manufacturers.¹⁴⁰ In 1846 there appeared the first, though brief, sign of schism in the weaving community when the journeymen weavers organized a short-lived association of their own to fight against the master weavers who, it was alleged, overcharged the former for the use of the looms and shops, and tended to monopolize work when it was short.¹⁴¹ In the early 1850's there were some faint noises from power-loom weavers and journeymen-bleachers demanding a ten-hour day.¹⁴² In 1856 the Weavers' Committee protested strongly against the role of George Savage, an 'inspector' employed by the Manufacturers' Association to bring to justice weavers he found to have embezzled yarn.¹⁴³ None of these, however, ever developed into major issues of confrontation between the parties involved, and, in fact, they were all of very short duration. The piece-rates, therefore, constituted the most important question of the day. It is for this reason that the strikes should be viewed within the context of the economic history of the industry.

¹³⁹ The Northern Star, Sept.12, 1840, p.3.

¹⁴⁰ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.246f.

¹⁴¹ The Northern Star, Oct.31, Nov.7, Nov.14, 1846.

¹⁴² Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.477.

¹⁴³ Ibid., Vol.III, p.220f.

The relationship between strikes and economic fluctuations has attracted the attention not only of historians but of scholars in such disciplines as Economics and Industrial Relations. In studying the price and strike figures for the U.S.A. and Canada between 1881 and 1919, Alvin Hansen found that during the downswing of the trade cycle the greatest proportion of the strikes occurred in periods of depression because it was then that the pressure to reduce wages was applied most vigorously. These were, essentially, defensive strikes. On the other hand, Hansen argued, labour became aggressive during periods of prosperity, launching the "most bitter" strikes during the boom in order either to counter rising prices or to effect a redistribution of the profits.¹⁴⁴ But subsequent writers have found this model too neat to fit the facts. According to Hobsbawm "it remains true that striking 'leaps' increasingly tended to occur less at the bottom of slumps and more at the bottom of the cyclical upswings of rising employment."¹⁴⁵ This argument is within the pale of the 'J-curve' theory which associates protest action with unfulfilled rising expectations.¹⁴⁶ But still other historians see differences between occupational categories. They see that in the 19th century "the older craft, artisan and building trades, with their traditions and experience of organization" were most active in seeking improvements in wages and so on during booms when

¹⁴⁴ Alvin Hansen, "Cycles of Strikes, "The American Economic Review, Vol.XI, No.4 (1921), p.618.

¹⁴⁵ Hobsbawm, "Economic Fluctuations and Social Movements", op.cit., p.132.

¹⁴⁶ See Lawrence Stone, The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529-1642, (1972), pp.15f.

conditions were favourable. On the other hand, the "newer occupations, without such traditions or experience, such as factory workers," tended to strike against reductions during economic depressions rather than for advances in better times.¹⁴⁷ One historian would label this latter mode of operation as a manifestation of a lack of 'sophistication', or an "inability" on the part of the workers concerned "to phrase more positive demands."¹⁴⁸

The attempt to differentiate between the trades is valid but "traditions and experience of organization" were not the only determinants of the workmen's nature and timing of protest action. Another variable, no less crucial, was the general economic condition of the trade in question. Workers in hand-loom weaving, one of the oldest trades, tended to engage more in defensive than in aggressive action. The trade in general, whether in cotton, silk or linen, was almost constantly on the defensive, what with the glutted labour market, the invasion by the power-loom, and the recurrent trade crises.¹⁴⁹ It is my contention that the linen weavers' tendency to engage in defensive rather than aggressive action, to resist a reduction in the piece-rates rather than to seek their rise, was a reflection not of any weakness of character inherent in the weaving community as such but rather of the langour of their trade.¹⁵⁰ A disproportionately greater number of the strikes were in response to either reductions in the piece-rates or increases in the warp lengths not accompanied by corresponding

¹⁴⁷ I. Prothero, "London Chartism and the Trades," Economic History Review, 2nd ser., XXIV, 2 (May 1971), pp.204f.

¹⁴⁸ Stearns, op.cit., p.18.

¹⁴⁹ For the cotton industry see Bythell, op.cit., passim.; for silk see Sir Frank Warner, The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom, (1921), pp.58ff.

¹⁵⁰ This point constitutes the underlying theme of Chapter Two above.

increases in the rates of pay. Manufacturers invariably resorted to such measures during the trade depressions. Strikes or any other aggressive action to achieve an improvement in the price list, such as there occurred in 1818, 1825, 1836 and 1853 were the exception rather than the rule. They were associated with times of relative prosperity - and such times were very rare in linen. These aggressive actions, most of which were successful, were neither as bitter nor as protracted as the defensive actions against the erosion of the piece-rates.

What of the weavers' methods of action? Was there an obvious shift from 'primitive' spontaneity and violence to more 'modern' or 'sophisticated' strike action which was organized and relied on rational argument? In general this seems to have been the case. The rowdy demonstrations, the anonymous threatening letters, the punitive violence against 'knobsticks' and 'recalcitrant' manufacturers gave way, after the strikes and riots of 1829 to moral suasion - to orderly protest meetings at which speakers revealed a mastery of the economic arguments, to weavers' petitions and deputations, to collections and to contests for public opinion in the local press. Whereas in 1818, 1823 and 1829 strike-breakers had their windows smashed and yarn destroyed, those in 1844 or 1855 received written and verbal appeals to desist from their "base conduct towards their fellow men."¹⁵¹ The strongest sanction the weavers could think of in 1844 was to publish the names of the strike-breakers in the press and in hand-bills.¹⁵² Discretion became the better part of valour. Why did the weavers refrain from the use of force from the 1830's onwards? Perhaps they outgrew this mode of

¹⁵¹ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, p.229. Idem., Vol.III, pp.31 & 43.

¹⁵² Ibid., Vol.II, p.229.

behaviour from a conviction that it was wrong to resort to it. But to say this is to assert and not to explain. Not all the influences that were brought to bear upon violent men are open to historical inquiry. But if there is one important factor which had a bearing on the method of protest action among working men, it was the radical and Chartist activities of the 1830's and 1840's. In the radical and Chartist training schools the weavers learned the strength of the collection hat, the magic of the orderly popular meetings, the art of persuasive argument and the power of unanimous resolutions. These lessons they applied to the industrial battle front from the late 1830's onwards.¹⁵³ A lesser explanatory variable is the fact that nearly all the strikes after 1840 were partial rather than general. Financial support given by weavers in employment obviated the necessity for resorting to desperate violence during the strikes.

It would be wrong, however, to view the pre-1830 period as one of purely and simply primitive rioting during strikes. True, some actions, like the outrages at Keresforth Hill in 1829, verged on barbarity, but there was much in these earlier strikes that was 'modern' or 'sophisticated'. Thus one finds that, like in 1855 or even 1872, striking weavers in 1818 courted public opinion through the medium of the press.¹⁵⁴ The use of strike committees or deputations and the formulation of demands in appropriately phrased 'petitions' were all familiar modes of action before the 1830's. Besides, during some of the weavers' riots, there were voices of 'moderation' among their influential leaders who were ready to deprecate any acts of violence.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ For the post-1830 radicalism and the Chartist movement, see Chapter Nine below.

¹⁵⁴ See the narrative of the 1818 strike above (Section II).

¹⁵⁵ Supra, p.332.

Although there was no monolithic response to the strikes on the part of both the manufacturers and the civil authorities, certain patterns of behaviour were characteristic of the period. Only on rare occasions did the employers manifest any readiness to compromise. Perhaps the economic difficulties of the industry rendered such compromise difficult or impossible. One needs to know more about the history of individual businesses before one can make a correct judgement on this matter. As was demonstrated in 1829, the magistrates were sometimes more than eager to play their paternalistic role of reconciling masters and their men. But in moments of crises, when riots appeared to threaten life and property, the civil authorities brought the overwhelming weight of the forces of law and order to bear upon the situation, and the weavers were always the losers in such confrontations. Also, as often as not, the weavers lost in the less dramatic legal battles. During a good number of the above strikes, manufacturers had recourse to the law of Master and Servant which invariably operated in their favour. Many masters brought their striking weavers to court mainly under 17 Geo.III, C.56 which provided for a prison term of up to three months for neglect of work, or up to six months for failing to return material taken out.¹⁵⁶ As we have noted above, many weavers went to prison under this law. In 1818 the Combination Acts were invoked. On many occasions the imprisonments had the predictable effect of soaring the weavers' feelings and, consequently, prolonging the duration of the conflict.

¹⁵⁶ See Daphne Simon, "Master and Servant," in John Saville, ^(ed.) Democracy and the Labour Movement, (1954), esp. pp.166-167. See also George White, op.cit., pp.68f. et passim.

Could the weavers have achieved more through better organization? To those with a traditional approach to the study of trade unionism as an institution, the story of the Barnsley weavers is bound to be disappointing. The Webbs have defined trade unionism as "a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment."¹⁵⁷ Implicitly, such a definition refers to formal organizations as differentiated from the 'ephemeral' combinations which arose in connection with specific disputes. Among the Barnsley linen weavers we learn of the formation of such a formal organization in 1825; it quickly fades out, only to re-emerge briefly in the mid-1830's. It was not until 1844 that a more or less permanent institution, the Barnsley Weavers' Association for the Protection of Wages was created. In May 1846 the members adopted 27 rules and regulations for their Association. Membership was open to all "trustworthy" persons belonging to the trade at an entrance fee of 3d. for 'first class' members (adult males) and half that amount for 'second class' members (boys under 16, and all females). The town and its environs was divided into lodges for the purpose of collecting the regular subscriptions and for other organizational needs. Every strike had to have the sanction of the Committee which was to allow to the members on strike a weekly subsistence rate of 6s. for every adult and 3s. for every child under the age of ten. The members also approved 14 rules pertaining to the "Funeral Brief" of the trade Association, whereby subscribing members were entitled to funeral benefits.¹⁵⁸ As we saw earlier on, the Association played a crucial role in the strikes which took place after 1844. But the importance of this Association should not be over-emphasized. As in the pre-organization era, the Weavers' Society

¹⁵⁷ S. & B. Webb, op.cit., p.1.

¹⁵⁸ Burland, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.257f.

tended to mobilize during industrial disputes. Properly defined, it fell short of the Webbs' "continuous association".

Viewed as a whole, the period under discussion was characterized by what one may call 'informal trade unionism' among the linen weavers. This institution, if we may call it so, operated not on the initiative of a permanent bureaucracy but rather through the weavers' own ad hoc response to situations as they arose. Its essential characteristics, the riot apart, were the strike committee to plan strategy, the monster public meetings and demonstrations to rally support, the deputations to petition the manufacturers or remonstrate with the strike-breakers, the subscriptions to provide financial strength to the strikes, and the occasional press campaign to court public sympathy.

Living as we do in an age of bureaucratically run institutions, including the trade union, we may find the concept and function of an informal association difficult to grasp. The advantage of a formal, permanent trade union is that it does not only respond to the erosion of its members' standards of living but regularly seeks to improve them, and also renders other welfare services to its members. An informal institution, characterized by ad hoc response, could not fulfil all these needs. But was this necessary? We have seen that for most of the period improvement in the piece-rates was 'not on'. As for the welfare needs, fulfilled through membership of a formal modern union, they are, in any case, the needs of an age dominated by impersonal relationships. In early 19th century Barnsley we are dealing with a community in which everyone knew almost everyone else, in which public meetings were called by a 'bellman' who traversed the town and its environs within minutes, and in which contacts and welfare needs were fulfilled by the closer and more extended family units, the benefit clubs, the friendly societies, the public houses, and the chapels and churches - all of which rendered the formal trade union a

virtually superfluous institution. One cannot but agree with Professor Turner that "people of the same occupation, who are regularly brought together in the same workplace or town, may acknowledge regular leaders, develop customs of work-regulation and systematic 'trade practices' and produce a disciplined observance of the latter without embedding these procedures in any formal records," that is, without operating within the framework of a formal union.¹⁵⁹

It is important to note that the Barnsley weavers' struggle against the erosion of the piece-rates transcended their own immediate geographical locality. Thus in September 1847 the Leeds weavers of Messrs. Wilkinson and Hill, who were resisting a wage cut, found the Barnsley weavers very responsive. The Barnsley men decided to give financial assistance "to the men of Leeds who have so often assisted us in our struggles when we were placed in a similar situation."¹⁶⁰ From August 1848 the Knaresborough linen weavers, on strike against a cut in pay, received 3d. per week from each Barnsley weaver.¹⁶¹ In 1853 and 1854 the Barnsley weavers' support for the textile workers of Preston who were locked out was quite considerable.¹⁶² And we learn that in April 1857 subscriptions were being collected in Barnsley for the linen weavers of Drogheda in Ireland who were on strike resisting a reduction in wages.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ H.A. Turner, Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy, (1962), p.51.

¹⁶⁰ The Leeds Times, Sept.25, 1847, p.8.

¹⁶¹ The Leeds Mercury, Aug.11, 1848, p.10.

¹⁶² The Sheffield Free Press, Jan.14, 1854, p.5.

¹⁶³ Ibid., Ap.4 & Ap.18, 1857, pp.8.

Perhaps in conclusion one needs to admit an apparent weakness in the foregone discussion. The weaving community has been treated as a constant factor whose immortal members were ever present at all the militant events of the decades. Little notice has been taken of the fact that weavers came and went. In mitigation, however, one must point to John Vallance, Arthur Collins, Frank Mirfield, William Ashton, Peter Hoey, Richard Taylor or Richard Jackson, to mention but a few, who lived through all, or most, of these events. Above all, one must emphasize that the community, with all its developing mores, values, traditions and culture, did not die. Throughout the period weavers plied their looms in the shops, attended market twice a week, exchanged views in an ever-growing number of public houses, participated in their various institutions, and regularly joined hands to celebrate the annual Barnsley feast. The community was always there.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BELATED MILITANTS: THE MINERS' STRUGGLES.

Come ye hardy Miners, who for years have
filled the coffers of the tyrants who have
made desolate the homes of your wives and
children. Let next Monday be a gathering
of tens of thousands.

(Extract from a Barnsley Chartist placard
during the 'Plug Plot' strikes in August 1842).

Union Hail! Let the echo fly,
The spacious earth around;
And may the tear and mournful sigh,
Again be never found.

(Chorus of the "Miners' Hymn" first sung
in Barnsley in 1844).

I. A Subservient Labour Force?

Unlike the Barnsley linen weavers, that bellicose race which prided itself on a tradition of militancy from very early in the century, the town's coal miners acquired a reputation of docility and subservience. They were late comers into the world of industrial militancy. Even when they finally came out in 1843-44 to seek a redress of their grievances, their short-lived movement collapsed almost as abruptly as it had begun. It was not until the 1850's that industrial militancy became part of the miners' culture. In this chapter we shall seek to do four things. First, to attempt an explanation for the miners' non-militancy in the earlier part of our period; secondly, to account for and briefly narrate the local events of industrial unrest that engulfed the British coalfields in 1843-44; thirdly, to explain the sudden debacle of the movement; and

lastly, to trace the development of events which followed the miners' defeat in 1844.

There is no record of significant miners' strike or trade union activity in Barnsley and the neighbourhood until 1843. Thus during the 'Plug Plot' strikes of 1842 a local Chartist hand-bill, announcing a meeting of all the working men in the District, made a special appeal to the "hardy Miners, who for years have filled the coffers of the tyrants."¹ It would appear that even the brief spurt of trade unionism and industrial action known to have taken place in some Yorkshire collieries in 1819, 1825 and 1833 hardly spread into Barnsley.² We are told elsewhere of the widespread agitation between 1831 and 1833 among the colliers of South Wales, Lancashire, the Midlands, the North-east and some parts of Yorkshire.³ The miners' trade union for Yorkshire is reported to have figured prominently at the 1831 Bolton conference which decided to join Doherty's National Association for the Protection of Labour.⁴ Again, one searches the sources in vain for any evidence of involvement by the Barnsley miners in these events.

¹ Eli Hoyle, "History of Barnsley and the Surrounding District: From the Earliest Times to A.D. 1850" (unpl. Vol. 1890?, Barnsley Reference Library, hereafter, B.R.L.), p.330.

² See Frank Machin, The Yorkshire Miners: A History, Vol.I (Barnsley, 1958), pp.31-35. The year 1819 seems to have been an exception. A strike was reported at one colliery: Sheepscar Library (Leeds), Harewood MSS. (Lieutenancy Papers, Box 1), Joseph Beckett to Viscount Lascelles, Dec.3, 1819.

³ Ibid., p.37f; R.Page Arnot, The Miners (1951 ed.), pp.36-38; Raymond Challinor, The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1972), pp.26-28; J.R.Raynes, Coal and Its Conflicts (1928), pp.25-27; E. Welbourne, The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham (1923) Ch.II; Richard Fynes, The Miners of Northumberland and Durham (Wakefield, 1971 ed.) chs. IV-VII.

⁴ Machin, op.cit., p.36; G.D.H. Cole, Attempts at General Union, (1953), p.35; Sidney & Beatrice Webb, History of Trade Unionism (1911 ed.), p.109.

In July 1836 it was reported that the miners of Barnsley and the District, who "had hitherto held aloof from the numerous misunderstandings between masters and workmen," had issued a month's notice to go on strike, unless their wage demand was met.⁵ The strike does not seem to have taken place after all. Whether this was because their demand was met, or because they feared reprisals from their employers is not known. But since it was during a period of boom in which workers in different industries scored successes in their attempts to increase their wages,⁶ the Barnsley miners probably won an advance before they had to go on strike.

If the Barnsley miners ever engaged in industrial warfare at all before the 1840's, such skirmishes must have been too insignificant to be acknowledged by the West Riding press. It will be recalled that weavers' strikes in this period were reported by the press. For the miners, the period was, by and large, a non-union, non-militant era. Their non-militancy is the more surprising, given the relatively frequent strikes among the hand-loom weavers, which ought to have acted as a spur to the miners. After all, as we saw in Chapter Three, most of the town's miners shared the same neighbourhoods with the weavers. But to try and correlate in this way the industrial militancy of the two groups begs two crucial questions: 1) whether the conditions of employment affecting the two groups of workers were really comparable, and 2) whether, in fact, the residential contiguity of the two work groups necessarily created an internal cohesion between them which ought to have been reflected by the same attitudes and temperaments towards industrial conflict. Perhaps it is easier to start

⁵ Hoyle, op.cit., p.295 (Hoyle misquotes the date as 1835); The Leeds Times, July 9, 1836, p.5.

⁶ See Chapter Six above, p. 341.

with the latter point. A residential neighbourhood has a considerable influence on one's readiness or reluctance to engage in industrial action, but this factor is subordinate to a much more important one of the influence of the work situation and the general conditions of employment, obtaining in a given industry. In this respect it has been established that conditions in the linen and coal industries were considerably different.⁷ Is it possible to demonstrate that the Barnsley miner worked under conditions which rendered him less militant than his neighbour on the linen hand-loom? There are some points which are capable of sustaining such an argument.

Before the railways 'opened up' the Barnsley district, coal mining was a relatively small-scale industry employing a comparatively small labour force. The census figures for 1841 would bear this out.⁸ In a situation where most coal masters engaged a handful of men relations between management and the labour force were likely to have been on the personal side and therefore conducive to paternalism on the part of the employers and, probably, deference on the part of the miners. Unlike the linen weavers, the colliers in this early period lacked the numerical strength necessary to give them the confidence of victory. Partly because of the smallness of their number and partly because of the nature of their work, the colliers were far more vulnerable to the dangers of blacklegging than the hand-loom weavers. A hand-loom weaver, working in his own home was almost impossible to displace. A strike-breaking weaver would not only have to bring with him his own bulky loom (hired or bought) but also find

⁷ Supra, Chapter Three, Section V.

⁸ See Table 1.8 above.

ready accommodation. He also risked incurring the fury of thousands of hostile townsmen, women and children. The collier, on the other hand, especially when he did not enjoy the advantage of being among several hundreds or thousands of fellow colliers, could, at a stroke, be barred from his place of work which would then be readily occupied by eager agricultural labourers, colliers from another coalfield, or even unemployed Barnsley weavers.⁹ After all, for all the unattractiveness of coalmining as an occupation, the remuneration in the industry was much better than in many others, especially linen and agriculture. Since colliers were usually reinstated after the strikes, the employment of non-collier blacklegs was generally not so much a replacement of striking colliers as a psychological weapon against the strikes.

The point has already been made that the collier, in comparison with the linen hand-loom weaver, was a much better paid worker.¹⁰ There is no evidence of large-scale unemployment or drastic wage reductions in the coalmining industry before the depression of 1839-42. In fact, before its vast expansion due to the extensive railway construction, the coal industry was generally subject to far less severe fluctuations than were the textiles. The gap between the linen hand-loom weaver and the collier was, therefore, considerable. The former, clinging on to a moribund trade in an ailing industry, was subject to a progressive erosion of his unenviable wage, and periodically found himself out of work. The latter, in an up and coming industry whose product enjoyed an expanding market in this earlier period, received better wages, and most of the time was assured of constant employment. Scenes of large-scale misery, proverbial among the hand-loom linen weavers, were virtually unknown among the colliers. It has been

⁹ Infra, p.383.

¹⁰ See Chapter Three, Part V, above.

suggested that a category of workmen who feel 'relatively deprived' in comparison with some other 'reference group' are apt to protest, and probably protest bitterly, about their disadvantaged position.¹¹ It is arguable that the reverse is also a likely situation. A group of workmen who are 'relatively privileged' can lapse into complacency or even reaction. The Barnsley collier who, unlike his neighbour on the linen hand-loom, did not have to submit to frequent piece-rate reductions and unemployment, must have looked at his own position with a great deal of satisfaction. The consequences of taking on his own employer in such a situation were too terrible to contemplate. There was one other element of privilege which applied to most of the Barnsley miners and which might have contributed to their non-militancy. The major coal seams, especially the thick Barnsley and Silkstone seams, were relatively easy to work, if compared to most of the seams in West Yorkshire.¹²

Returning to the comparison between coalmining and domestic linen weaving, there were differences in how the two occupations facilitated combination between the workmen. The hand-loom weavers, most of whom worked unsuperintended in close proximity to one another, were easier to assemble in case of a grievance. All that was needed was for the Weavers Committee, or any other group of activists, to send a 'bellman' round the town and its environs announcing a public meeting. Within minutes May Day Green would be thronged by hundreds, or even thousands, of weavers. But such communication among scattered colliers, almost literally immured

¹¹ W.G. Runciman, Relative Deprivation and Social Justice (1966), pp.9-35 et passim.

¹² The colliers of West Yorkshire seem to have been much more militant than the Barnsley colliers in this early period. In fact the initiative for the formation of the Miners' Association in 1842 originated from West Yorkshire. See Machin, op.cit., pp.31-35 & below p. 378.

throughout the day in the scattered workings in the town and the district, was extremely difficult. The collier could not usually enter or leave the mine at his pleasure. His movements were dictated, among other things, by the winding gear, safety requirements and the flexibility of the underground steward. It would require a high degree of consciousness on the collier's part to defy all these obstacles.

II. Throwing Down the Gauntlet:

In the Autumn of 1843 the long period of industrial calm in the mines came to an abrupt end when the newly formed Miners Association of Great Britain and Ireland began to take root in the Barnsley coalfield. The following year saw a show of strength between the miners and their employers, characterized, on the one hand, by the miners' participation in public rallies, strikes and, in some cases, acts of violence, and, on the other, by employers' combination aimed at countering the new strength of the defiant workmen. What had led to this sudden eruption?

To a large extent the explanation lies in the reasons behind the rise of the first miners' national organization which has attracted the attention of a few historians.¹³ Three major forces conspired to create an atmosphere of militancy in the British coal mines at this time. During the

¹³ See especially, A.J. Taylor, "The Miners' Association of Britain and Ireland, 1842-48," Economica (New Series), XXII, (1955), pp.45-60; Raymond Challinor & Brian Ripley, The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists (1968); Raymond Challinor, The Lancashire Miners, op.cit., Ch. Two.

depression of 1839-42 the miners' earnings had considerably dropped.¹⁴ But consequent upon the recovery of the national economy in 1843 the demand for coal rose rapidly; more collieries were opened and the labour force greatly expanded. The rising prosperity of the industry aroused among the labour force high expectations of better remuneration which, unfulfilled, engendered feelings of discontent. Secondly, some of the grievances of mine labour were already a subject of public debate. The 1842 Report of the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children revealed some of the most appalling conditions under which mine labour worked. The crescendo of public outrage which greeted the Report is well known, and the effect of this on the consciousness of the miners is easy to imagine. Lastly, although the miners' generally steered clear of Chartism, the radicalizing influence of the movement on them was considerable. The Northern Star relentlessly espoused the miners' cause, and the demonstration effect of such events as the national conventions or the 'Plug Plot' strikes is unlikely to have been missed, especially in urban mining communities. The success achieved by the recruiting missionaries of the Miners' Association in the different coalfields was phenomenal.¹⁵ The union activities at local level in turn helped to bring to the fore the manifold grievances of a local nature.

¹⁴ As well as a reduction in the piece rates, the miners worked short-time during the depression: The Records of the Clarke Family of Noblethorpe Hall, 'Colliers' Wages, 1835-40', Sheffield Central Library (Archives), CR 31.

¹⁵ See Taylor, op.cit., p.48.

Although the initiative for the formation of the Miners' Association is believed to have been first taken in Yorkshire in 1842,¹⁶ the Barnsley miners were, apparently, not involved at this early stage. In fact, credit for the founding of the Association goes to West rather than South Yorkshire.¹⁷ It was the indomitable effort of the Association's itinerant lecturers that helped to plant the seed of unionism in the Barnsley district. The first miners' public meeting in Barnsley was held on August 14, 1843 on the Barebones, an open ground adjoining Wilson's Piece. The chief speaker, S. Davies of Newcastle, addressed the miners on the advantages of unionism. The meeting resolved to form a Barnsley branch of the Miners' Association.¹⁸ In the subsequent weeks Mr. Davies lectured to miners at different collieries in the district. After his talk to the Silkstone miners on October 15, twenty men were enrolled into the Union that day.¹⁹ At this time membership in Barnsley itself numbered more than a hundred.²⁰ A meeting was held at Barnsley some time during the month to express support for the Cumberland miners dismissed from employment for joining the Union. A subscription fund on their behalf was initiated.²¹ At the November County delegate meeting at Dewsbury Barnsley, together with Rotherham and Sheffield, was constituted into a lecturing district with a Mr. John Toft as the resident lecturer, charged with the duty of proselytising the ununionized miners in the district.²² The stage was set for confrontation between the miners and the coal masters in the new year.

¹⁶ See Ibid., p.47; Challinor, op.cit., p.30; Challinor & Ripley, op.cit., p.62.

¹⁷ Challinor & Ripley, op.cit., Ch.4; Machin, op.cit., Ch.III.

¹⁸ Hoyle, op.cit., p.335.

¹⁹ Rev. Joseph R. Prince, Silkstone (Pennistone, 1922), p.110.

²⁰ Hoyle, loc.cit. This figure represents about a third of the mining population in the town.

²¹ John Hugh Burland, "Annals of Barnsley" (4 Vols., MS, B.R.L.), Vol.II, p.216.

²² Ibid. The other two districts were Wakefield & Bradford.

On New Year's Day 1844 the Barnsley district branch of the Miners' Association held a mammoth demonstration on May Day Green, attended by about 2,000 men. It was a moving occasion. The miners paraded the streets of Barnsley carrying colourful banners and accompanied by a band. At the May Day Green Mr. Holdgate conducted the "Miners' Hymn" which was "sung with soul-stirring effect." The meeting called upon those miners who had not joined the Union to do so without delay, and resolved to bring to an end the long working hours, "injurious to their moral and social interests, and destructive of their lives."²³ In the subsequent months the miners held weekly meetings and listened to numerous speeches made by guest lecturers of the Miners' Association among whom was the indefatigable David Swallow. Those who lived in or very near the town held their weekly meetings in "Pickering's Large Room," otherwise known as the 'Union Inn', a regular meeting place for both the Weavers' Association and the Chartists.²⁴

On February 20th about 2,500 miners of the West Riding held a great rally on Hood Hill, about mid-way between Barnsley and Sheffield. Two important resolutions were approved by the meeting. First was the determination to fight for an eight-hour day. Second was the decision to set up a victim fund in aid of members dismissed from their work on account of their association with the Union. In this respect, sympathy was expressed with the miners on strike in the St. Helen's pits, and collections were made for their support.²⁵ The West Riding delegate conference held at Barnsley on March 2nd took measures to strengthen the victim fund and elected delegates to the Glasgow national conference for later in the month.²⁶

²³ Ibid., p.220; Hoyle, loc.cit.; The Halifax Guardian, Jan.6, 1844,p.5.

²⁴ Burland, op.cit., p.216, et passim; The Northern Star, Jan.13 & Feb.3rd, 1844.

²⁵ Burland, op.cit., p.223; The Northern Star, Feb.24, 1844, p.5; The Sheffield Iris, Feb.22, 1844, p.4.

²⁶ Burland, op.cit., p.223.

These organizational activities in Barnsley, which had started in the Autumn of 1843, had done a great deal to precipitate conflict at a number of pits. As tempers frayed, groups of miners at pit level openly expressed their grievances and sought to redress them. The official Union became increasingly alarmed at the men's militancy. At the Barnsley meeting of January 6th 1844 a resolution was passed condemning local, unapproved strikes as being "subversive to the best interest of the Association."²⁷ But it was difficult for the Association to turn the tide which it had itself set in motion.

Shortly after David Swallow had lectured at the Blacker Hill colliery near Worsborough, the men at the pit went on strike. It was sparked off by a simple disagreement on January 12th between one of them and the underground steward. A man who felt ill was refused permission by the underground steward to leave the pit. When this came to the notice of the rest of the colliers, they immediately left the mine and proceeded to Barnsley where they registered for membership of the Miners' Association. On January 20th they came out on strike. In their memorandum to their employers they demanded three things: 1) That their wages should be increased to bring them in line with the rest of the miners in the district. 2) That the weight of their corves, which they considered to be the heaviest in Barnsley, should be reduced; and 3) That the banksmen should be dismissed. They accused the banksmen of tyrannizing upon them and defrauding them in assessing the coal they produced. The strike lasted about three weeks, after which

²⁷ The Northern Star, Jan.13, 1844, p.8; For the issue of local strikes and how they were opposed by the official Union see Challinor, op.cit., p.37.

a negotiated settlement was achieved through the medium of the Union.

The miners' rates of pay were raised but the banksmen were not dismissed.²⁸

In the third week of January the miners of Mr. Jackson in Barnsley went on strike for higher wages. Within a week, their employer had agreed to give them an advance averaging 2 shillings a week.²⁹ But in some collieries the miners met more determined resistance from their employers.

Early in February, even before the Hood Hill demonstration, the miners at the Stainborough New Silkstone colliery owned by Messrs. Field, Cooper and Company started restricting output with a view of attaining an eight-hour day and raising their piece-rates. They submitted a list of grievances to the management and demanded their immediate redress. The colliery proprietors' reaction was sharp and uncompromising. On February 15 five of the men, alleged to be ring-leaders, were given notice to quit the Company houses, which measure provoked an all out strike beginning on February 23rd. A week later, Field, Cooper and Company, in a further act of victimization against the 'ring-leaders', brought the five men before the magistrates, charging them with unlawful neglect of work. Having defied the court order a week earlier to return to work, the five miners were, in consequence, sentenced to three months' imprisonment on March 6th. Miners had gathered in their "thousands" outside the Court House from all parts of the district. When news of the prison sentence reached them, there was loud groaning and hooting, and the civil authorities were apprehensive that there might be a riot. Singing the Miners' Hymn, the crowd marched from the Court House to the Oddfellows Hall where they discussed the case of the 'Stainborough victims'. Luke Palfreyman, a Sheffield solicitor who had been hired to defend the men, advised the miners to secure their release on a writ of Habeas Corpus. Funds were raised in the Yorkshire and other coalfields for this purpose. On April 30, before the Court of

²⁸ Burland, op.cit.; Hoyle, loc.cit.

²⁹ Burland, op.cit., p.222; The Northern Star, Feb.3, 1844, p.1.

Queen's Bench, W.P. Roberts secured the acquittal of the five miners.

They had a tremendous reception in Barnsley when they got back.³⁰

In the meantime, the strike by the rest of the Stainborough miners went on. On March 23rd they issued a hand-bill to the public in which they stated their grievances. The gist of their complaint was that their earnings had been seriously eroded since the late 1830's. The wage rates had been reduced, the corves had been enlarged, and the reductions they incurred for such things as candles, gunpowder and tools had been greatly increased. They accused the banksmen of treating them with tyranny and contempt.³¹ Support for the Stainborough miners in Barnsley and elsewhere was considerable. From the last week of March to the beginning of June when the strike is said to have ended, they received £573 in weekly subscriptions and donations.³² The list of donors shows that support came from a wide spectrum of sympathisers. The larger proportion came from fellow miners, especially in the Barnsley district (mainly through the Association, but also in the shape of voluntary subscriptions). But support from sources other than mine labour was considerable: from weavers, craftsmen of different types, butchers and, especially, shopkeepers. There is also evidence that a few well to do individuals lent their support to the Stainborough strikers. On April 20th, for example, they acknowledged £165 from "a friend" and £50 from "a gentleman". It hardly need be said that these sums were beyond the means of individual working men.³³ Simultaneously with the Stainborough strike were other prolonged strikes at Rawmarsh, Cranemoor, Old Silkstone and West Melton Field, all of them in

³⁰ Hoyle, loc.cit.; Burland, op.cit., p.224; The Leeds Times, Mar.9,1844, p.8; The Halifax Guardian, Mar.9, 1844, p.5. The Sheffield Iris, Mar. 7, 1844, p.5.

³¹ Burland, op.cit., pp.224f.

³² Published in the weekly columns of the Northern Star and reproduced in Ibid, pp.225ff.

³³ Ibid.

the rural district of Barnsley for which the town served as a centre for meetings, rallies and collections.³⁴

The owners of the New Silkstone colliery at Stainborough put up a determined fight against their men. Apart from having five of their miners put in prison, they recruited strike-breakers mainly among agricultural labourers. Between March and May Field, Cooper and Company evicted a number of the strikers to make room for the new men. At the end of April it was reported that as many as 100 men had been recruited.³⁵ Early in June a Wakefield paper reported: "We are given to understand that since the strike the fresh men have worked the pits on a Monday, which has not been the case for the last fifteen or twenty years."³⁶ One notable scene of confrontation between a strike-breaker and some of the men on strike is worth mentioning. On March 22nd, right at the beginning of the Stainborough strike, a strike-breaking collier named Thomas Burkshaw was seized by a crowd of men and women while he was returning from work. They stripped him of all his clothes and, when he tried to run away in the nude, they chased him over a distance of one mile, besmearing him with mud and pelting him with missiles. The crowd surrounded his house, chanted the Miners Hymn, and threatened that they would leave him incapacitated for the rest of his life. Two men were later arrested in connection with the incident and gaoled for twelve months.³⁷ On June 10th the Stainborough strike formally ended. The number of blacklegs had greatly increased and the weekly subscriptions to support the strike had dwindled, mainly because at this time the strike among the Barnsley miners had become

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The Sheffield Iris, Ap.11, Ap.25, 1844; The Halifax Guardian, Mar.23, 1844. Strike-breaking was the main weapon used by some employers in other coalfields at this time, see Williams, op.cit., pp.93-94; Fynes, op.cit., Ch.XVII.

³⁶ The Wakefield Journal, June 7, 1844; The Halifax Guardian, June 8, 1844.

³⁷ Hoyle, loc.cit.; The Halifax Guardian, Mar.30, 1844, p.5.

general. Those Stainborough miners who were lucky enough to be readmitted into the colliery returned on the old terms and had to renounce their union membership.³⁸

At the Glasgow national conference during the closing days of March the Miners' Association voted against a general strike, though the delegates gave a go ahead for the strike of the miners of Northumberland and Durham. The Conference sanctioned similar action by the miners of Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, provided the struggle of the North-east miners were to end in victory.³⁹ The alacrity with which this stipulation was rejected in many coalfields is well known.⁴⁰ At the beginning of April the Yorkshire miners were poised for a confrontation with their masters. On April 8th the miners of the Barnsley district held a public meeting on May Day Green to hear the report of their delegates to the Glasgow conference. The meeting approved a new scale of prices which was to be put to the coal masters for implementation. George Wood's motion that all miners whose employers refused to comply with the new scale of prices should, on April 15th, give a month's notice to go on strike, was

³⁸ Hoyle, loc.cit.

³⁹ Taylor, op.cit., p.55; Challinor & Ripley, op.cit., pp.124f.

⁴⁰ See Taylor, op.cit., p.56; Williams, op.cit., p.97; A.R.Griffin, Mining in the East Midlands (1971), pp.71ff; Challinor & Ripley, op.cit., Ch.10.

"unanimously" passed.⁴¹ Similar resolutions were passed in Wakefield, Sheffield and elsewhere in the Riding.⁴² On April 15th the notice was actually served on the masters.⁴³

The coal owners decided to meet the miners' challenge head on. Earlier in February they had met to form their West Riding Coal Masters' Association as a response to the Miners' Union. On April 22nd the Masters' Association met again in Wakefield, condemned the Miners' Union "interference with the rights of the masters and workers," and resolved to deny employment to all Union members.⁴⁴ And the Barnsley magistrates issued a public warning that those union members who would 'intimidate' any miner willing to work, would be severely punished.⁴⁵ A Sheffield paper reported at the end of April that some miners had withdrawn their notice to strike.⁴⁶ But the same paper reported three weeks later that, at the beginning of the strike on May 11th, "all the (Barnsley) pits were at a standstill."⁴⁷

⁴¹ The Sheffield Iris, Ap.11, 1844, p.5. Apparently, the delegates to the Glasgow conference misled the meeting by reporting that Conference had sanctioned immediate industrial action: See Challinor & Ripley, op.cit., p.162.

⁴² Machin, op.cit., p.53f. The miners at Clarke's Silkstone collieries demanded a piece-rate increase of more than a third. They also demanded that the yardage should be 13 instead of 20 corves to the dozen - which suggests an attempt to shorten the working day. Sheffield Archives, CR152.

⁴³ The Sheffield Iris, Ap.18, 1844, p.6. Eighty-five signed notices to John Lawton, agent to Mrs. Clarke of Silkstone, are in the Clarke Records, Sheffield Archives, CR 139A.

⁴⁴ Machin, op.cit., p.54.

⁴⁵ The Halifax Guardian, Ap.27, 1844, p.5.

⁴⁶ The Sheffield Iris, April 25, 1844, p.5. In fact Lord Fitzwilliam is known to have successfully broken the union among his men at this stage: Idem; Machin, op.cit., p.54.

⁴⁷ The Sheffield Iris, May 16, 1844, p.5.

Two days after the strike had begun, the Coal Masters Association meeting in Wakefield reiterated their determination to reassert their authority by terminating the employment of those who refused to give up their union membership. Also, no collier would be reinstated unless he consented to work "on the terms and for the hours usual at the colliery at which he has been employed."⁴⁸

The Coal Masters' Association, however, was a combination of big and small colliery owners, unequally placed in their ability to meet the miners' challenge, especially when the strike became general. A coal giant like Earl Fitzwilliam, who ran a paternalistic employment system, could manage to achieve a quick submission from his men.⁴⁹ After all, his collieries at Elsecar were relatively isolated. But those masters whose collieries were in or close to Barnsley faced a more formidable army for whom united action was much easier. Moreover, some coal masters were unwilling to let their collieries remain indefinitely at a standstill at a time when the market for coal was brisk. Only Field, Cooper and Company of the Worsborough Park and Stainborough collieries, and Day and Twibell of the Old Mill and Mount Osborne collieries reckoned they had enough coal stocks to see them through the strike. Early in June, therefore, some few coal masters offered their men a compromise. On June 10th, for example, Richard Thorp, proprietor of the four Gawber Hall collieries, agreed to give his men the increase they applied for, provided they gave up their union membership. The men accepted the terms and resumed work on the following day.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid. & Copy of coal masters' resolutions signed by Henry Briggs, Chairman of the West Riding Coal Masters' Association, Clarke Records, Sheffield Archives, CR 139A.

⁴⁹ See Machin, op.cit., p.51.

⁵⁰ The Sheffield Iris, June 13, 1844, p.5.

Throughout May and part of June there was in Barnsley what a Sheffield journal called a "paper war" between the coal masters and the miners on strike as the two sides, in their claims and counter claims, vied with each other for public support.⁵¹ Financial support for the miners from the public was considerable. Throughout the period of the strike the Barnsley district miners collected more than £800 from the public. On one occasion they received 169 loaves of bread "from the people of Barnsley."⁵² But by mid-June, when the strike fund was almost depleted, and when a few miners, like those at the Gawber collieries, reached unilateral compromises with their masters, the Union's determination to fight was broken. On June 17th and 18th all the miners went back to work on terms, in some cases, worse than those they had worked under before going on strike. Alleged ring-leaders were not re-employed.⁵³ But just as the coal masters were about to celebrate their victory, the miners came out again on June 20th. The conditions which they had been subjected to, they stated, were intolerably "stringent and harsh." Most had been deprived of their fringe benefits and of any insurance against injury.⁵⁴ There were two other, and probably stronger, reasons for the resumption of the strike. Several delegates from other coalfields visited Barnsley when the men called off their strike; they urged them to fight on. It was reported also that the linen weavers jeered and booed the miners when the latter gave in: "We are ashamed to meet them (the weavers), and where would we go without meeting weavers in Barnsley?"⁵⁵ This time the masters were more willing to compromise. Messrs. Sutcliffe and Company of the Victoria colliery gave their men an

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Burland, op.cit., pp.225ff. Although the weavers were engaged in disputes at this time, there were no conscious attempts by the two groups of workers to link their struggles.

⁵³ The Sheffield Iris, June 20, 1844, p.5; The Wakefield Journal, June 24, 1844, p.3.

⁵⁴ The Sheffield Iris, June 27, 1844, p.5.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

immediate advance, and the other masters promised to increase the wages on July 1st.⁵⁶ By July 4th the strike had ended in all but three of the collieries in the district. The proprietors of the Old Silkstone, Cawthorne and Rawmarsh collieries refused to compromise. Mrs. Clarke of Silkstone evicted about 30 families from her cottages.⁵⁷ Although the larger body of colliers had formally renounced their union membership as a pre-condition for resuming their employment, they continued to give financial support to their colleagues who were still out. The agent at Day and Twibell's collieries issued a warning that he would discharge any miner who continued to subscribe money for the support of colliers on strike.⁵⁸ By the end of September complete industrial peace had returned to all the workings in the district. For the rest of the year the indomitable David Swallow continued to make occasional missionary appearances in and around Barnsley but his message seems to have fallen on deaf ears.⁵⁹ Through the auspices of the Miners' Association the Barnsley miners had improved their piece rates. And now, after hardly more than a year of activity, the Association was but a spent force. How does one explain this speedy passing of the miners' Union in Barnsley? Although some of the factors can be attributed to local developments, the trend of events at national level, especially in connection with the fate of the Miners' Association, hastened the demise of unionism among the miners of Barnsley and many other localities.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., July 4, 1844, p.5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., July 11, 1844, p.4; Burland, op.cit., pp.232f.

⁵⁹ Burland, op.cit., pp.234ff.

The depression of 1847-48 is said to have dealt a finishing blow to the Miners' Association.⁶⁰ Before the depression, however, the Association had, for some time, existed but in name. In Nottinghamshire union activity had ended as early as August 1844,⁶¹ and by mid-1845 the Miners' Association in Yorkshire was "extinct."⁶² Even in Lancashire where the Association had proved more resilient than elsewhere, damaging dissension in 1846 had permanently crippled the movement.⁶³ To put the demise of the Miners' Association in perspective, therefore, one must not over-estimate the role of the 1847-48 depression. The major reason behind the collapse of the Association was the structural conflict within the movement itself, a conflict of centralism versus local autonomy. The Union's missionary activities during its early life had helped to arouse the miners' consciousness, thus engendering the spirit of militancy which the miners so overtly expressed from the winter of 1843-44. It was precisely the Association's failure to exert its control on, and direct, the local strike activity that finally led it to its own downfall. Because the branches defied the Glasgow conference resolution that no strike should be launched until the Northumberland and Durham miners had won their struggle, the central Association received little funds for the support of the strike in the North-east.⁶⁴ The region that had been the backbone of the movement was therefore left to suffer defeat. But for a bare minimum of inter-regional contact, the miners fought their battles at district level, their success or failure depending on local circumstances.

⁶⁰ Challinor, op.cit., p.38.

⁶¹ Griffin, op.cit., p.75.

⁶² Challinor & Ripley, op.cit., p.166.

⁶³ Challinor, op.cit., pp.41ff.

⁶⁴ Taylor, op.cit., pp.50-51.

As wage earners, the Barnsley miners, with very few exceptions, emerged out of the 1843-44 conflict as victorious men. But as trade unionists, they had witnessed the pulverisation of their movement. The employers' willingness to advance the men's wages must be seen against the background of the fortunes of the mining industry. After a debilitating depression the industry was experiencing a boom. For the coal masters, to let the dispute drag on would have been like scattering their fortunes in the wind. Except for Field Cooper and Company, the employers did not have the advantage of employing blacklegs. In fact, when the strike became general, most of them did not even try to recruit them. They opted for a compromise. At the same time, however, the idea of having in their employ union men, potential or even real rebels who would have the power to dictate terms, was intolerable. More so because these same men had always known their place as a subservient labour force. A recognition of, or an acquiescence in, the right of the miners to unionize would have created an entirely new situation which would have proved exacting to the autocratic employers. They would have had to change their attitudes as required of them by the new forms of relationship. This would explain the determination of the West Riding Coal Masters' Association to fight the union tooth and nail.⁶⁵ In Lancashire, where the employers failed to build a strong Association, the miners' Union lingered on for a bit longer.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ For similar employers' resistance in the Midlands see Griffin, op.cit., p.71; A.R. Griffin & C.P. Griffin, "The Role of Coal Owners' Associations in the East Midlands in the 19th century," Renaissance and Modern Studies, Vol.XVII, (1973), pp.106-107; Williams, op.cit., pp.93f. For the North-east see Fynes, op.cit., passim.

⁶⁶ See Challinor, op.cit., p.40.

But apart from the employers' offensive, the local Union increasingly lost its grip on the rank and file. Many miners began to look at themselves as bread winners rather than union members. Old, repressed loyalties reasserted themselves and the employers' offer of a higher wage was preferred to the now dubious union card. The Barnsley miners never again challenged their masters as a united force until 1858.

III. Disjunction: 1845-1858.

The Miners' Association was both a success and a failure. It was a success inasmuch as it aroused the miners' consciousness in the first place, thus helping to create the conditions which enabled some of them, especially in Yorkshire and Lancashire, to secure an advance in wages. There are three ways in which the Association can be regarded as having failed. First, in some areas, especially in the North-east, its members were badly defeated. Secondly, it failed to sustain its own life, collapsing like a pricked balloon after only a brief existence. Thirdly, and because of the brevity of its life, the Association destroyed the miners' self confidence and gravely harmed their belief in the efficacy of trade unionism. The employers, on the other hand, were reassured of their might over their subordinates. For the next decade or so trade unionism among the miners was, to all intents and purposes, a dirty word. But this does not mean that the miners never sought a redress of their grievances. Whatever protest action was taken, however, it was usually

at colliery level and more often than not was carried out infrequently and with pitiful diffidence.

An attempt among the Barnsley miners at presenting a united front was made in March 1847. On March 24th they held "a numerous meeting" on East Hill Field near the town at which they expressed their intention to apply for an advance in wages at the rate of 3d. per dozen corves. It was argued that since the coal masters had increased the consumers' price by 8d. a ton, the colliers were entitled to an increase. A newspaper reporter claimed that "the whole of the speakers and those who had the management of the meeting were linen weavers, not a collier interfering." In his interview with many colliers, the reporter claimed, he had been given to understand that they (the miners) were perfectly satisfied with their wages and very much resented the weavers' interference in their affairs.⁶⁷ Isolated action among some miners was taken here and there in the early 1850's.

In June 1851 the banksman at the Darley Main Colliery incurred the fury of the colliers who had held a grudge against him for sending down back to them more 'motties' than they were pleased with.⁶⁸ In other words, they believed that he was defrauding them in the way he assessed the coal which they got. On the morning of June 25th the miners tied a rope

⁶⁷ Leeds Intelligencer, Mar. 27, 1847, p.8. The Intelligencer was generally hostile to any form of industrial action. It is arguable that the paper was trying to prejudice the miners' case by attributing their demand to the instigation of Barnsley's proverbial trouble-makers, the linen weavers.

⁶⁸ For a note on 'motties' see Chapter Three above, p.186.

around the banksman's waist and gave him a dip in the Dearne and Dove Canal. In the afternoon, while he was on his way to the Barnsley Court House to apply for summonses against them, they recaptured him and took him to an open ground called Beechfield. As the miners were about to duck him into an open well, the landlord at Beechfield arrived on the scene in time to rescue him from his captors.⁶⁹

The early 1850's were the beginning of the so-called 'mid-Victorian boom'.⁷⁰ Demand for coal outstripped supply, thus forcing up the price paid by the consumer.⁷¹ One characteristic of this early stage of the boom was that prices generally rose very sharply, especially between 1852 and 1854.⁷² This was a situation conducive to working-class militancy in their attempt to raise their wage rates. The climax came in 1853, the year of the celebrated Preston lookout. For the first time in fifteen years the Barnsley linen weavers dared apply for an advance in wages.⁷³ Colliers in many districts also struck for higher pay. In Wigan, for example, there were scenes of violence perpetrated by the miners.⁷⁴ In some counties attempts were even made by the miners to form unions. Such efforts foundered in the West Riding of Yorkshire.⁷⁵ But there was some activity at pit level.

⁶⁹ Leeds Mercury, June 28, 1851, p.10.

⁷⁰ Walter W. Rostow, British Economy of the 19th century (1968 ed.), p.20.

⁷¹ See Chapter Three above, p.162f.

⁷² Rostow, op.cit., p.23.

⁷³ See Chapter Six above, Section VII.

⁷⁴ Challinor, op.cit., pp.46-47.

⁷⁵ Machin, op.cit., pp.68-72.

In January 1853 the colliers at Clarke's Silkstone collieries struck work apparently at short notice. They later apologized to their employer for going on strike before exhausting the 'normal channels', but they won an increase of 3d. in the dozen.⁷⁶ On July 8th the colliers at the Oaks colliery came out also for higher wages but after only four days, they reached "an amicable settlement" with their employers.⁷⁷ At the end of September two hundred miners of the Darley Main colliery struck work for better wages. It was not until early November that they won an increase.⁷⁸ There was apparently no attempt among the miners of the different pits to co-ordinate their wage demands. Some moved on hearing rumours, sometimes false, that miners at a neighbouring colliery had gained an increase.⁷⁹ At a number of collieries wage advances were gained without any strike action.⁸⁰ In the next four years there were only four disputes in Barnsley, all of which were concerned with local colliery issues.

On August 13th 1855 a short stoppage of work took place at the West Silkstone colliery in protest against the introduction of fortnightly payments to replace the weekly ones. The issue seems to have been quickly settled.⁸¹ On October 14th the 40 colliers at Messrs. Day and Twibell's Old Mill colliery gave in their notice to strike against the new system

⁷⁶ Clarke Records, Sheffield Archives, CR 152.

⁷⁷ Leeds Mercury, July 16, 1853, p.10.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Nov.5 & Nov.12, 1853, pp.11; Sheffield Free Press, Oct.1, 1853, p.8.

⁷⁹ Clarke Records, Sheffield Archives, CR 152. Interview between the colliery agent and the miners' delegation, Jan.13, 1853.

⁸⁰ Burland, op.cit., pp.370, 455 & 473; Sheffield Free Press, Sept.10, 1853, p.7.

⁸¹ Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, p. 72.

of weighing coal introduced earlier in February. They issued hand-bills explaining their case to the public, canvassing for moral and financial support, and urging potential blacklegs to keep clear of the Old Mill colliery. The new system of weighing, they claimed, was designed to obtain from them a larger amount of coal than they were paid for. They sustained a loss in their wages of from 1 to 7 shillings in a fortnight.⁸²

In their reply, Day and Twibell explained that the miners detested the new system simply because it made it impossible for them to defraud their employers. For a long time the Company had taken things for granted by assuming that every corf carried a specific weight of coal. But they had been wrong, they said, and the consequent loss to them had been incalculable. In times when coal got was not sold immediately and therefore having to be stockpiled, the banksmen had usually measured the miners' coal by the eye. But the collier was "wide awake," for "he took care to 'top' his corves pretty well, but to leave them hollow in the middle." This, said Day and Twibell, "was the colliers' notion of justice to his employers," who had done their best to keep them employed even when demand for coal was low, and who had spared no expense to make sure that the Old Mill colliery was one of the safest in Barnsley.⁸³

The Old Mill miners were unyielding, and so the hand-bill debate went on. On November 1st they claimed that they were opposed not to the system of weighing as such but to the way it was carried out at their colliery. The new system demanded that every corf weigh 8 cwt. and a quarter, and if it was a single pound short, they were paid for only 8 cwt. But if it

⁸² Ibid., p.98; Barnsley Times, Oct. 27, 1855.

⁸³ Barnsley Times, Oct. 23 & Nov. 3, 1855; pp.2.

weighed more, the miners were never remunerated for the extra coal. They repudiated the proprietors' allegation that they had indulged in cheating prior to the introduction of the new system. How could they, they asked, when the banksmen were always "wide awake?" (They sarcastically appended a Shakesperian quote: "we thank thee Jew for teaching us that word").⁸⁴

The employers' retort to the miners' claims was angry. Day and Twibell believed that the author of their miners' hand-bills was not himself a miner but "some broken down quack who does not understand their case nor the meaning and force of language."

This solemn blockhead of a scribe, not having the sense of a collier, cannot see that weight stands opposed to measure, and that 14 lbs. to the stone and 8 stone to the cwt. was as true in 1854 as it is in 1855, and that the phrase "new system of weighing," if it has any meaning at all, stands in contradiction to the "old system of measuring and guessing" which was practised when coals were tipped over on the hill.

The employers' hand-bill denied the colliers' statement that coals in excess of 8 cwt. and 1 quarter in a corf were not paid for: "Corves vary in weight as the coals are large or small, wet or dry, hollow or solid, and the men are paid accordingly."⁸⁵ It is not certain who won this acrimonious verbal battle. It was probably the employers, for it is not reported that the strike took place after the notice had expired on November 13th.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Nov.10, 1855, p.2.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Original emphasis.

The next dispute, which took place at the Oaks colliery in 1856, was ostensibly about safety but the trend of events would suggest that it proved an opportune occasion for the colliers to express their resentment of the role of the underground steward. Safety was a sensitive issue at the Oaks colliery. It will be recalled that in 1847 seventy-three colliers died there in a major gas explosion. The memory of the disaster was still fresh in many people's minds. Indeed, the colliers in the 1856 dispute quoted the incident in an attempt to strengthen their case. On June 2, 1856 a workman employed at the Oaks colliery to examine the mine for safety was slightly burnt in a small explosion in a section of the mine. He was discharged for negligence. It was alleged that he had fired a shot without first, as he should have done, testing the area by means of a safety lamp. But the miners at the Oaks had another view of the affair. To them, George Minto, the underground steward, was entirely to blame. He had built a 'stopping' in the area of the explosion, thereby obstructing ventilation. On June 23rd three hundred colliers came out on strike. In their manifesto to the Barnsley public they claimed that Minto was extremely incompetent, that as long as he remained underground steward, their safety would always be at serious risk. They would not go back to work unless Minto was dismissed. On June 24th they sent their representations to Charles Morton, the Government Inspector of Mines in Yorkshire. The colliery proprietors invited an independent inquiry which Mr. Morton obligingly carried out on July 1st and 2nd. He (Mr. Morton) declared the mine "fit and safe," but the miners still demanded Minto's dismissal as a pre-condition for their resumption of work.⁸⁶ It proved to be a

⁸⁶ Ibid., June 28, July 5, July 12, 1856, pp.2; Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, pp.205-211.

protracted dispute in which public recriminations, acts of violence and even court prosecutions all came into play.

About twelve of the Oaks colliers had not joined the strike when it first began; they helped to get the coal for the ventilation furnace to keep the mine free from the accumulation of explosive gas. These men incurred the anger of those on strike. Unlike the weavers who had long abandoned violence as a means of protest, these miners bore some of the attributes of 'primitive rebels'. On July 15 a strike-breaker named Morgan was assailed by a group of about 100 strikers while he was returning from work. He was rescued by constables who, fortunately, happened to be at hand. At the same time as this affray the Oaks colliery engineer, who was riding as a passenger on an omnibus which passed by, was severely injured on the head by a large stone which issued from the riotous crowd. Over the following week-end more strike-breakers were attacked and the house of the controversial George Minto was invaded and its windows broken. This turn of events greatly alarmed both the Oaks proprietors and the civil authorities in Barnsley. On July 22nd over 100 special constables were sworn in and extra police personnel were brought in from Sheffield. All work at the Oaks, including maintenance work, was suspended.⁸⁷ In the following weeks both sides in the dispute outbid each other for public support through open meetings and the columns of the Barnsley Times.

Firth, Barber and Company, the colliery proprietors, claimed that their colliery was under the care of "one of the most eminent mining

⁸⁷ The Barnsley Times, July 19 & 26, 1856, pp.2; Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, pp.215f. Declaration for appointing of special constables signed by Thomas Taylor and Rev. William Wordsworth, magistrates: Harewood Manuscripts, Lieutenancy Papers, Box 1. Sheepscar Library, Leeds Archives.

engineers in the Kingdom." George Minto, the man at the centre of the dispute, only acted according to the directions of the mining engineer. The firm claimed that, in terms of safety, their colliery was "not surpassed by any other pit." The refusal of their miners to resume work, even after an impartial Government Inspector of Mines had declared it safe, meant one thing: the men were simply bent on having Minto discharged. "This," the mine proprietors declared, "we refuse to do, as it would be a new and curious feature for the proprietors and engineers of collieries to submit to the dictation of their workmen as to who should or should not be appointed to the subordinate situations in the management."⁸⁸

In an attempt to enlist the support of their fellow miners, the turnouts called a public rally for August 4th to be attended by all the miners of the district. The attendance on May Day Green was quite "numerous". The spokesmen for the men on strike told the meeting that Minto, the underground steward at the Oaks, was extremely incompetent, unfit to manage "the most dangerous colliery in Yorkshire." It was irrelevant, the spokesmen argued, that Minto acted under the direction of a qualified mining engineer because, after all, the engineer, who controlled many other collieries, most of which were in the Midlands, visited the Oaks colliery only once a month. The speakers cited case upon case to prove that Minto was utterly incapable of looking after their safety. The response of the audience was encouraging. They unanimously agreed that "no employer is justified in exacting labour from those in his employment under circumstances which endangered the lives of the workmen."

⁸⁸ The Barnsley Times, Aug.2, 1856, p.2; Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, p.223.

The meeting also pledged itself "to afford its moral and pecuniary support to the men on strike until they shall have brought their praiseworthy struggle to a successful termination." It was the first time in more than ten years that the colliers of Barnsley had assembled to express their solidarity in this way. It probably augered well for the not so distant future. A man, described by the newspapers as "a stranger", went so far as to suggest the formation of a colliers' union.⁸⁹

An attempt on August 6th to reach a settlement of the dispute failed because the five members of the colliers' delegation refused to compromise. The employers gave freedom to the colliers to select a man of their own choice to take charge of safety matters in the pit. This innovation, however, would not in any way affect the duties and functions of George Minto. But the colliers would accept nothing short of Minto's dismissal.⁹⁰ So the strike went on. A couple of days later, two strike-breakers were waylaid and assaulted by about twenty turnouts who beat them up with hedgesticks. Three men were later prosecuted in connection with the incident.⁹¹ On August 13th eviction summonses were served on 32 colliers who lived in Firth, Barber and Company's cottages at Ardsley.⁹² Charges and counter-charges between the two sides went on in numerous hand-bills and newspaper articles until the men finally went back to work in the early days of September.⁹³ The colliery proprietors made a categorical denial of

⁸⁹ The Barnsley Times, Aug.9, 1856, p.2.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, p.228.

⁹² Ibid., pp.229-230, 232.

⁹³ Ibid., pp.223, 235-237; The Barnsley Times, Aug.23, Aug.30, 1856, pp.2.

the press reports that Minto had been dismissed before the men could resume work: "No alteration," they said, "has been made, or is intended to be made in the system of the management."⁹⁴ So the strike was defeated. It would appear that in spite of their vigorous campaign, the turnouts had not elicited much financial support for their cause.

Was the dispute really about safety? In one of their hand-bills the strike committee wrote: "We wish the public to see that we have learned something by the explosion of 1847, and we are determined to protect our lives to the best of our skill."⁹⁵ Was this a matter of playing on the emotions of the public? It is plausible, at some level, to see the colliers' action as an expression of concern about the incompetency of the underground steward and how such a state of affairs put their own safety at risk. The Oaks explosion of 1866 in which 361 people died can be seen as a vindication of the 1856 strikers. But underground stewards, who normally came from the ranks of colliers, had only a limited knowledge of safety matters anyway. A great deal depended on the colliery manager or the mining engineer and, in turn, on the readiness of the colliery proprietors to spend money on safety equipment in accordance with the engineer's advice. Why would the colliers not return to work even after the Government Inspector of Mines had declared the workings to be safe? It is arguable that underlying the welter of argument about safety was probably a deeper conflict. The strike might also have represented a culmination of the colliers' long-borne grievances against the underground steward. The dismissal of their fellow collier after the small explosion probably set the forces of protest in motion. The underground steward, it will be recalled, was the one man among the supervisory staff who had the

⁹⁴ The Barnsley Times, Sept. 13, 1856, p.2.

⁹⁵ Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, p.235.

closest and most frequent contact with the colliers in their work place. He had much power over their freedom of action and movement. Responsibility for the implementation of the colliery by-laws devolved upon him. He saw to it that they worked banks properly, that they propped the roofs at the right time, and that they took the proper safety measures, including the use of safety lamps where such practice was in force. No collier would leave the underground workings without his permission. As well as being an expression of concern for the safety of their lives, the Oaks strike of 1856 was probably also the men's repudiation of what they might have regarded as a disagreeable supervisor. Or, to link the two points together, the miners were probably seeking to assert their right to job control in order to be able to maximize both their safety and their freedom at work.⁹⁶

The next dispute happened at the Wharnccliffe Silkstone colliery in May 1857. Following the big explosion at the Lundhill colliery on February 19th, when 189 individuals were killed, many colliery proprietors in Yorkshire took mine safety much more seriously than had hitherto been the case. At the Wharnccliffe Silkstone colliery the use of safety lamps was made compulsory. The use of gunpowder and naked candle lights were completely banned. Such a measure was not well received among the colliers. In May, the 29 colliers at the pit came out on strike and issued the following statement:

We have been getting our coals by the light of a naked candle, and blasting them down with powder, but our employers think it proper to prohibit both without

⁹⁶ In one of their newspaper articles the colliery proprietors had claimed, and maybe not so widely off the mark, that the colliers' "real objection to Mr. Minto is that he has been doing his duty to his employers, and would not let the men do as they wished, to our detriment." The Barnsley Times, Aug.16, 1856, p.3.

Making any advance in our wages. Now, kind friends, we are sure that to get our coals down by spending strength solely at the hammer and wedge, instead of blasting them, and by the dim glitter of a lamp, it will make a monstrous reduction in our wages. We are therefore wholly at a stand. 97

Their appeal, it would appear, evoked no public support and the strike probably ended quickly. Did not such a strike constitute a contradiction of the cause for which the Oaks colliers had struck work in the previous year? The contradiction is apparent rather than real. The miners did not take their safety lightly, but primary consideration was with their wages. After all they had been using naked candle lights and gun-powder for years. Colliers, before and since, have always accepted an element of risk in their occupation. The Lundhill men probably weighed the well known imperfections of the safety lamp against the sacrifice in wages which they would suffer if they adopted it.

The disputes we have examined in this section concerned such divergent issues as wages, modes and frequency of payment, measuring and weighing, safety, and regulations at work-place. Although the disputes concerning these issues were localized, they would highlight the kind of grievances that the miners as a labour force, in whatever colliery, were likely to have experienced at one time or another and which grievances they either expressed or repressed. The diffuse nature of the protest actions in this period was, in the main, a reflection of the lack of unity and organization among the Barnsley colliery work-force. But the moment when such unity of action would thenceforward become part of the miners' culture finally arrived in 1858.

⁹⁷ Burland, op.cit., Vol.III, p.364.

In response to a fall in demand, coal masters began individually to reduce wages early in 1858. On January 23rd the West Yorkshire coal owners decided at their meeting in Leeds to reduce the miners' wages by 15 per cent. Following this lead, the South Yorkshire coal owners met at Barnsley on March 10th and decided on a 15 per cent reduction as well. The reduction would take effect on April 14th. The coal masters, probably much to their surprise, met with determined resistance from the miners. In West Yorkshire a union was formed in March. A general strike and lockout there dragged on till late November. In the Barnsley area the foundation for the South Yorkshire Miners' Association was laid at the meetings of March 29th and April 1st. By April 3rd subscriptions were being collected on behalf of the Union. The negotiations of April 17th and 20th between representatives of the Union and the Masters' Association ended in the latter's withdrawal of their proposed wage reduction. About three individual coal masters, however, tried to take on the union but, with the exception of Earl Fitzwilliam, they did not succeed. One remarkable achievement of the union at this stage was the eight-hour day aimed at restricting output as a means of raising the price of coal. The events of 1858 ushered in a new era, one of permanent, though not always invincible, unionism among the miners.⁹⁸ The establishment of the National Union in 1863 served to strengthen this unionism at local level. The events of this period from 1858 onwards, when the Barnsley miners would more often than not act as a united force, do, unfortunately, fall outside the scope of this study. The end of this study therefore marks the end of an era in the history of mine labour. We shall next go on to look at the exciting role which labouring Barnsley played in the political arena.

⁹⁸ For a fuller description of the 1858 events in Yorkshire see Machin, op.cit., Part II, Ch.1 & Part III, Ch.1. See also Yorkshire Miners' Association: Annual Demonstration Souvenir (Barnsley, 1932), pp.17f.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EARLY RADICALISM, 1816-1820

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you -
Ye are many - they are few.

(Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Mask of Anarchy").

One day in words, they conquer all,
Next day, without a stroke they fall:
One moment they are in the sky,
Next moment in a dungeon lie.
Poor Radicals! in notions wild
In knowledge weaker than a child.
In politics a barber's block;
In battle lighter than a cork;
In words a monster with vain chat;
In vision blinder than a bat.
What is your skill, what is your power?
A mushroom blasted in an hour.

(Robert M'Lintock, "An Allegorical Account of
the Radicals' March from Barnsley to Grange Moor").

I. The Issues:

Although a great deal has been written about the radical activities in the period immediately after the Napoleonic wars,¹ the field has not yet been fully covered. The local sources remain largely unexplored. Barnsley participated in this radical movement to an extent and in ways which are more interesting and more important than has hitherto been generally recognized. An analysis of the character of the local events in this period

¹ See inter alia, J.L. & B. Hammond, The Skilled Labourer (1919), Ch.XII; E.P.Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, 1968 ed.); C.R.Fay, Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century (1920), Chs. 3 & 8.

may throw some light on the debate about the nature of the radical movement as a whole. This study constitutes a recovery of local and 'rank-and-file' initiative which has been lost to historians in the quagmire of 'national' accounts which tend to overemphasize the role of London (either radical London or the Home Office) in English radicalism.

The evidence makes it possible to reassess the received accounts and interpretations of the radical movement in two areas: the causation and the character of the radical experience. As to causation, two historiographical traditions have predominated. The first is the 'whig' view which dismisses the working-class radical activities of the time, especially the conspiratorial tradition, as the work of agents provocateurs who played on the simple minds of working-class dupes.² The second is the economic determinist interpretation which relates the rise of radicalism to the economic hardship of the period.³ The evidence would show that both interpretations as such are unsatisfactory. They negate the human attributes of the radicals as thinking beings, capable of handling ideas.

Regarding the characterization of the movement, two interpretations deserve serious consideration. The first is the debate as to whether or not the radical events of 1816-1820 constituted a potential or near revolution.⁴ Second is the claim that this radicalism was the last phase of the 'Old Radicalism' of the late 18th century, dominated by the 'blood and thunder' men, "who still associated active politics with the heroic gesture of snatching up a sword or a pike and rushing into the van of

² See Hammonds, loc.cit.; G.D.H. Cole, A Short History of the Working Class Movement (1966 ed.), p.50.

³ In its unrefined form, see W.W. Rostow, British Economy of the 19th Century (1948), p.124.

⁴ See Debate between J.R. Dinwiddy, "The 'Black Lamp' in Yorkshire 1801-1802," and J.L. Baxter & F.K. Donnelly, "The Revolutionary 'Underground' in the West Riding: Myth or Reality?" in Past and Present, No.64 (Aug. 1974), pp.113-135.

Liberty."⁵ Concerning the revolutionary character of this radicalism, one must concede that the events do not lend themselves to easy interpretation. There was much that was revolutionary in the period 1816-1820 but in some of the received accounts the weaknesses of the movement and of the characters have been unwittingly overlooked. While the roots of the post-war radicalism can be traced to the late 18th century, it is nevertheless the case that the new movement was, by and large, generated by the forces of the period and that the major participants were recruited from a working class created by the new industrial order. We shall return to these themes after a chronological survey of the local events in the period.

The bulk of the evidence for what happened between 1816 and 1820 is based on the depositions of those who were arrested after the abortive insurrection of April 11th to 12th 1820. There is, therefore, a case for subjecting this evidence to critical scrutiny. But the independent accounts, though given under conditions of fear in 1820, are remarkable for their consistency, which lends them considerable credibility.

II. Working-Class Radical Activities, 1816-1820:

Barnsley experienced a state of unrest in the early 1810's in connection with Luddism. In April 1812 there were reports of unrest in most of the townships in the Wapentake of Staincross. On April 22nd the magistrates

⁵ White, op.cit., p.42. See also Thompson, op.cit., p.779.

swore in special constables and a detachment of the West Norfolk militia was stationed in the town. In January 1813 John Eadon, a Barnsley linen weaver, was transported for seven years for allegedly administering an illegal oath during the Luddite disturbances.⁶ But in comparison with the woollen districts of the West Riding, especially, Bradford, Halifax, Wakefield and Huddersfield, the town of Barnsley and its surroundings were relatively calm during the Luddite disturbances.⁷ The battle against shearing frames was irrelevant to a town which depended mainly on hand-loom linen weaving. It is moreover alleged that John Eadon, transported for administering an oath, was framed by a spy who was later paid £27 for his infamous service.⁸

If the events of 1812 are shrouded in mystery, the radical movement which began in 1816 is not. A serious reform movement gained momentum in connection with the mushrooming of the provincial Hampden Clubs and Union Societies in the last months of 1816,⁹ The local organization was called the Barnsley Union Society. Although Major Cartwright did not visit Barnsley, he was in contact with the members of the local Union Society through its energetic secretary, Thomas Ferrimond, a linen weaver, with whom he had regular correspondence. Cartwright sent the Barnsley reformers a great deal of

⁶ Statement of the magistrates concerning the appointment of the special constables, dated Ap.22, 1812: copy in Cusworth Hall Museum, nr. Doncaster; P.R.O., H.O.40/2: Major Burnham to Home Office Jan.31 1813; Hammonds, op.cit., p.325. Anon Sketches of Early Barnsley (n.d.), p.7; Frank O. Darvall, Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England (1969 ed.), Ch.VI.

⁷ P.R.O., H.O.40/1.

⁸ Hammonds, op.cit., p.325. Also P.R.O., T.S.11/813 (2676).

⁹ See Thompson, op.cit., p.678; Naomi Churgin Miller, "John Cartwright and radical Parliamentary reform, 1808-1819," English Historical Review, Vol.LXXXIII (1968), p.721.

literature, including the constitution of the Hampden Club in London and his 'Appeal to the Nation' which Ferrimond distributed among the members of the Society. Regular correspondence was also maintained between the Barnsley Union Society and similar associations in many parts of the country, especially in the industrial north.¹⁰ The Society organized frequent public meetings to discuss a petition for parliamentary reform. One such meeting was called for December 30th 1816. The magistrates took the occasion very seriously. J. Stuart Wortley, of Wortley Hall near Sheffield, rushed to Barnsley that morning, swore in about a hundred constables and alerted the town's troop of yeomanry. The meeting was chaired by Watson of Barnsley and was addressed by local and outside speakers, two of whom had come from Lancashire. To Mr. Wortley's surprise, "the whole thing went off quietly."¹¹ The 'Gagging Acts' of February to March 1817 put the Union Society out of existence and drove the radical movement underground.¹²

In April 1817 a Leeds informer, who signed as 'A.B.' and later revealed himself as James Mitchell, told the Home Office that 'delegates' were busy in Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands, travelling about the towns and co-ordinating plans for an insurrection. He reported that delegate meetings had been held in Leeds, Huddersfield and Wakefield. Barnsley was implicated in Mitchell's reports.¹³ During one of the delegate meetings held in Wakefield on May 5, Thomas Ferrimond, representing Barnsley and the district,

¹⁰ P.R.O., H.O.40/16 "The Voluntary Examination of Thomas Ferrimond", hereafter, "Confessions".

¹¹ P.R.O., H.O.42/157: Wortley to Beckett, Dec.30, 1816.

¹² P.R.O., H.O.40/16: Confessions; Thompson, op.cit., p.700; Fay, op.cit., p.25.

¹³ P.R.O., H.O.40/6 'A.B.' to Sidmouth, Ap.23 & 28, 1817. An anonymous letter from Wakefield was sent to Lord Sidmouth on May 17th giving details of the radical plan of attack: H.O.40/6 (7).

promised that, in case of action, Barnsley and its neighbourhood could muster forces to the strength of 5,000.¹⁴ Two weeks later, in the same place, the 'delegates' heard William Westenholme of Sheffield sing the praises of "the Barnsley lads" who, he said "were rather too forward and were bent on fighting the soldiers fairly and openly. They would not fight cowardly." Westenholme told the meeting that a Rising was expected in London on the 10th of June, and he gave his assurance that Barnsley, Sheffield and Huddersfield, for their part, would not shirk their duty. They had plans to advance an attack on Wentworth House, home of the Lord Lieutenant, and on the arms depot at Doncaster. General Byng had advance knowledge of these plans and accordingly stationed troops to guard the two targets. When Westenholme returned to Sheffield, he and other leading radicals in the town were arrested. They were betrayed by Thomas Bradley, a local spy who had been sent by the Sheffield magistrates to attend the Wakefield meeting.¹⁵ In June, Oliver, the notorious spy, visited Barnsley and later reported: "I found the people generally of the same disposition (i.e. revolutionary) and talked of being well prepared but seemed so poor."¹⁶ From about this time, following the surprise arrest of the radical 'delegates' at Thornhill Lees the abortive 'Pentridge Rising' in Derbyshire, and the furore concerning the role of Oliver as an agent provocateur,¹⁷ Barnsley radicalism remained in the doldrums until the last of the Gagging Acts expired in mid-1818.

¹⁴ P.R.O., H.O.40/9: "Report of a Government Informer".

¹⁵ Ibid: "Summary of the proceedings relating to the conspiracy in several parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire;" H.O.42/165: "The information of Thomas Bradley of Sheffield;" H.O.42/165: General Byng to Sidmouth, June 4, 1817.

¹⁶ P.R.O., H.O.40/9 & H.O. 42/165.

¹⁷ P.R.O., H.O.40/7: Byng to Sidmouth June 6th 1817; H.O.42/167: Fitzwilliam to Sidmouth, June 17, 1817; The Leeds Mercury, June 19, 1817; Thompson, op.cit., pp. 715-735; Hammonds, op.cit., ch.XII; White, op.cit., Chs. 13 & 14.

Around July 1818 the Barnsley Union Society was reactivated. Although this time it had no written constitution it retained its character and mode of operation. Its declared objectives were to encourage the reading of political pamphlets and newspapers as an educational drive, and to organize public meetings to agitate for parliamentary reform. The Society, which was otherwise known as the 'Penny Club', charged a subscription of a penny, per head, per week. The money, which was entrusted to George Watson, the treasurer, was used to purchase radical literature. They bought Cobbett's Register and Addresses, the Black Dwarf, the Cap of Liberty, the Blanketeer, the Manchester Observer and, once in a while, the Leeds Mercury. The radicals in the town and the surrounding district divided themselves into about fifty 'classes' of thirty persons each. On this basis, we can estimate the number of active, regularly subscribing members to have been about 1,500 out of a population of 10,000 or more. The radicals met in their classes on Monday evenings in private homes under the guidance of their class leaders. At these meetings one literate member would read aloud from the radical journals and afterwards they would all hold a discussion on the issues arising from the reading of these papers. The distribution of the radical journals constituted a sophisticated radical network. James Lowe of Barnsley got the papers from James Mann of Leeds through William Wild of Huddersfield. Lowe would then pass them on to his father-in-law, Thomas Ferrimond, overall leader of the Barnsley radicals. Every Monday evening Ferrimond distributed the papers to representatives from each 'class' who, in turn, took them to their respective group meetings for reading and subsequent discussion. In their class meetings the radicals were exposed to biting criticisms of the political system, to the grievances of the 'industrious classes' and how to redress them.¹⁸ It was these studious

¹⁸ P.R.O., H.O.40/16: Confessions; P.R.O., T.S.11/979: Depositions of Thomas Morgan.

class meetings that mentally prepared the Barnsley men for their part in the radical public meetings and protest demonstrations which swept the industrial districts in the summer and autumn of 1819.¹⁹

One Barnsley meeting held on July 12th 1819 was attended by a crowd estimated variously from 1,000 to 6,000. People poured into May Day Green from the township and its environs. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the major issues of the radical programme: universal suffrage, annual parliaments and vote by ballot. The meeting was addressed by local and outside speakers. Two major themes dominated the speeches: The first was the strong condemnation of the unrepresentative nature of the House of Commons - a factor, it was strongly emphasized, which exposed the 'industrious classes' to oppression and exploitation by the landed interests - the ruling class.²⁰ Mr. Willan of Dewsbury told the meeting

We see around us increasing distress produced by unequal legislation. There are two interests in this country, the landed interest, and the labouring interest. They ought to be united but they are separated. The labourers are looked upon as weighing nothing in the national scale.

And Brayshaw of Yeadon succinctly expressed the whole argument: "The men who pretend to represent you in Parliament, do not; they use the money of the public to satisfy their own lusts."²¹

The second theme of the meeting was an expression of a desire to be regarded as respectable and law-abiding citizens. Speaker after speaker rejected the use of force as a method of obtaining the rights they were demanding. Ferrimond, who chaired the meeting, started addressing his

¹⁹ For the wave of public meetings in the summer and autumn of 1819 see Thompson, op.cit., pp.738, 744ff.

²⁰ The Leeds Mercury, July 17, 1819, p.3. The Leeds Intelligencer, July 19, 1819, p.3.

²¹ Burland, op.cit., pp.388-389.

audience in these terms: "No man in Barnsley can say that I am either drunken, immoral or profane; but I am, and always will be, an advocate of reform."

Willan disassociated himself from any use of force:

It has been said of me that I wished to resort to physical force; but the force I would use is truth and reason. If I had embraced physical force I should have embraced the doctrine of the bosom friend of Lord Sidmouth, Mr. Oliver, who urgently pressed it upon me.

The chairman concluded the meeting with a further emphasis on this point:

"The voice of reason and justice will unite us together as one man. We shall then make a lasting demand for our rights; we do not mean by bloodshed, but by a manly perseverance."²²

These peaceful meetings alarmed the authorities everywhere. In Manchester the magistrates instituted a policy of repression aimed at suppressing such meetings. The story of Peterloo is well known.²³ The Barnsley reformers like their colleagues elsewhere, received the news of Peterloo with a sense of shock. They jumped onto the bandwagon of protest. On October 25, Barnsley sent delegates to a protest meeting at Sheffield, chaired by Lord Milton. Richard Jackson and Wooler, both of Barnsley, addressed the meeting. Jackson proposed a relief fund for the victims of Peterloo and within half an hour £15 was collected.²⁴

The Barnsley meeting on November 8 was a uniquely impressive occasion. There were radicals from different parts of the West Riding, including Leeds and Sheffield. They assembled on the Sheffield road, a short distance from the town. Marching to the music of the band, they moved through Warreners Lane, Crowwell Hill, May Day Green, Market Hill, Church Street, and ended up on the Fair field. The meeting opened with 'God Save the King'

²² Ibid. My own emphasis.

²³ See Thompson, op.cit., pp.649-654.

²⁴ Burland, op.cit., p.391.

and was chaired by none other than the Reverend Robert Ellis, minister of the Calvinistic chapel, Barnsley. The procession was a solemn occasion. At the head, a young man carried a placard bearing the word "Order". Next came Arthur Collins, an Irish linen weaver, who carried the symbolic Cap of Liberty. Then followed the female reformers dressed in white gowns with black shawls and gloves. The men formed the rear. Some of the flags they carried symbolised a sense of cruel bereavement. One flag carried a female figure attired in black, weeping over a tomb. Under the tomb were the words, "Thou shalt do no murder." Another had a picture of an infant pointing to the words, "Cursed is he that slayeth the innocent." Other flags bore slogans which expressed the familiar themes of the movement: A man carried a heavy burden on his back; over his head was the label, "Debts and Taxes" and under his feet, "A free-born Englishman."²⁵

The meeting was addressed by Richard Jackson, Thomas Ferrimond, both of Barnsley, James Mann of Leeds, and 'squire' Payne of Newhill Hall. Two main issues were the substance of the speeches: parliamentary reform and the Peterloo massacre. In the course of the proceedings a female Reformer, on behalf of her colleagues presented the meeting with the Cap of Liberty and a moving address. The Female Reformers pledged their support for the struggles of their "husbands, fathers and brothers, ... well knowing their distress and feeling with them in our families, the privations we are unhappily the subject of, seeing our children want bread and having at some time (sic) none to give them."

A number of resolutions were passed, two of which might have confounded those who had branded the working-class radicals as a bunch of sectarian activists. They expressed their thanks to Earl Fitzwilliam "for his

²⁵ The Leeds Mercury, Nov.13, 1819, p.4.

independent and spirited conduct" during his Lord Lieutenancy. Thanks were also given to the following for their part in the cause of Reform: Major Cartwright, Sir Charles Wolsley, the Duke of Norfolk, Sir Francis Burdett, Messrs. Pearson, Harney, Cobbett, Hunt and Wooler. The meeting finally passed an address to the prince Regent in which they expressed their grievances and appealed to him for redress:

that you will cause the conduct of the magistrates at Manchester on the 16th August, 1819 to be investigated in the House of Commons. ... That ... Your Royal Highness ... take into serious consideration, the unfair and partial state of the House of Commons, and use your utmost endeavours to make it what it ought to be, according to the constitution. ... We beg [you] not to forget the accumulating distress of the labouring part of the community, occasioned by excessive taxation, Acts for retarding the free importation of corn, and the failure of commerce, producing a deplorable lack of labour, and low wages for work ... 26

All over the West Riding of Yorkshire the magistrates diagnosed a change in temperature which was occasioned by Peterloo. Special constables were enrolled left, right and centre, and General Byng was inundated with applications for troops from such towns as Leeds, Huddersfield and Halifax.²⁷ The magistrates had read the correct writing on the wall, for the Home Office policy of repression, instead of suppressing radical activity as it was intended to, drove the radicals to a more militant position. Radical opinion was incensed and a sense of frustration spread like a bush fire

²⁶ The Leeds Mercury, Nov.13, 1819, p.4.

²⁷ P.R.O., H.O.42/193: Naylor to Hobhouse, Aug.28; Huddersfield magistrates to Fitzwilliam, Aug.20; Mayor of Leeds to General Byng, Aug.31, 1819.

through the radical districts. Their mood is succinctly expressed in the words of Joshua Hirst, a Huddersfield radical who was arrested after an attempted rising in that town on March 31st 1820:

About the month of November the Society (in Huddersfield) came to the determination of meeting no longer for Parliamentary Reform, conceiving that they would not be able to succeed and they therefore declared that in consequence of ... proceedings at Manchester not having been carried on according to their wishes, it was no longer any use to petition parliament but they would obtain what they wanted by physical force. 28

This may have been foolhardy but it was understandable. Through their class meetings, and the public demonstrations, the radicals had attained a high degree of consciousness. If they could not protest constitutionally, they could not but resort to conspiracy and physical force. The passing of the Six Acts in December 1819 and the trial of Henry Hunt early in 1820 only helped to precipitate the insurrections which began in February 1820.²⁹

From November 1819 the literate class leaders in Barnsley worked hand in hand with veterans of the Napoleonic wars. The classes were now popularly known as 'sections'. The radicals began to meet twice a week: once to read their journals and participate in political debates, and on the second occasion to undergo military training. The training usually took place between nine and eleven o'clock at night, and the open fields around the town provided ideal sites for field craft. A Mr. George Mitchell reported having witnessed 150 to 200 "young men", with pikes on their shoulders, drilling on Barebones, an open field in the south of the town.³⁰ A few

²⁸ P.R.O., H.O.40/12: Depositions of Joshua Hirst, April 3, 1820.

²⁹ P.R.O., H.O.40/11.

³⁰ P.R.O., H.O.42/200: Joseph Beckett to Viscount Lascelles, Nov.30, 1819.

days later, Francis Batty, a constable, saw about 200 men drilling in Wilson's Piece.³¹ In December a thousand men were reported to have been drilling in a field adjoining Stainborough Park, about three miles from Barnsley,³² Some witnesses, who from a prudent distance, saw the exercises going on, heard loud commands of: "Stand at ease;" "Attention;" "Shoulder arms;" "Quick March;" "Left, right." One witness, who reported the drilling to the Lord Lieutenant early in December, concluded his report with a sombre note: "Next Monday week is the day fixed for Radicals to commence their operations; everyman's property in and about this town is divided, and every Radical is to have a share."³³ And a manufacturer reported that a wife of a radical had advised a friend to dispose of her paper money as it would be useless after the Revolution.³⁴ This was alarmist reporting but it reflected the fear which was rife among the town's 'principal inhabitants!!

The local linen manufacturer and landowner, Joseph Beckett, told the Lord Lieutenant that Barnsley "weavers, colliers and stone-getters" were "ripe for any mischief when they may be set upon." He later complained: "No town is more radical than this town: nor worse protected: nor in need of an antidote to the spreading poison."³⁵ Towards the end of November, 28 local "Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders, Merchants, Manufacturers and Principal Inhabitants" sent a memorial to the Home Secretary requesting

³¹ Ibid. Depositions of Francis Batty, Dec.4, 1819.

³² Sheepscar Library, Leeds City Archives, Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I, Edward Taylor to Viscount Lascelles, Dec.13, 1819.

³³ P.R.O., H.O.42/200: John G. Ensign to Lascelles, Dec.2, 1819.

³⁴ Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I, Taylor to Lascelles, Dec.13, 1819.

³⁵ Ibid. Beckett to Lascelles, Dec.5, 1819.

military aid to guarantee "not only ... the safety of the lives of themselves and families, but also ... the preservation of their Property; Plunder and exaction being the main and principal views of the infuriated Radicals... who are encouraged to proceed in their unjustifiable trainings."³⁶ Dr. Stuart Corbett, a local magistrate, expressed the view that the liberty of the country was at stake, "if great members of the lower orders make this use of liberty."³⁷ During the Parliamentary debate on the Six Acts, the subject of illegal drilling in Barnsley was raised by the West Riding member, Mr. J. Stuart Wortley.³⁸ On December 13th when Dr. Corbett heard that a rising was planned for that night in Manchester, Barnsley and other places, he took no chance. He alerted the yeomanry, called in dragoons from Sheffield, and employed a spy to watch the movements of the local radicals. Also, the town's 'principal inhabitants' immediately formed a defence association.³⁹

How did these developments affect radical organization? The Union Society class meetings started doing more than political education and were transformed into dark corners of secret conspiracy. The 'Penny Club' became the 'Two Penny Club'. The extra money was needed to finance 'delegate' expenses, and the cost of communicating with other localities in the Kingdom. The fifty or so class leaders constituted the 'General Committee' of the radical organization (the Union Society or 'Two Penny Club'). This body was, in turn, linked to the 'Secret Acting Committee' of seven. It was the latter body that planned all the local operations and

³⁶ P.R.O., H.O.42/201: Lascales to Sidmouth, Nov.24, 1819; memorial enclosed.

³⁷ P.R.O., H.O.42/200: Corbett to Wortley, Dec.8, 1819.

³⁸ See debate on the "Training Prevention Bill," Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, Vol.XLI (1819-20), pp.851-856.

³⁹ P.R.O., H.O.42/201: Corbett to Wortley, Dec.13, 1819.

communicated with other towns, especially Leeds, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Sheffield and Manchester. The members of the Secret Acting Committee were: Thomas Ferrimond, Secretary, Thomas Ashurst, Treasurer, James Lowe, Craven, Crookson, Stephen Kitchenman, Richard Addy, and Benjamin Rogers, all of them linen weavers. It is not known whether the Secret Committee was elected or whether it was a self-appointed clique of zealous revolutionaries. Most likely, the elected secretary and treasurer appointed the rest of the Committee. Every Monday evening the General Committee met the Secret Acting Committee to hear what the latter had to say on the most recent developments regarding the plan for a national insurrection. These meetings usually took place at the house of Thomas Ferrimond, but occasionally the committeemen met in a secret room at Redman's "Weavers' Arms", a public house, frequented by linen weavers. The members of the General Committee would then proceed to their respective sections with the radical journals and instructions for their members. These instructions varied, but from around Christmas 1819 they were mainly of a military and conspiratorial nature.⁴⁰

In the closing days of 1819 and the early months of the following year a great deal happened behind a veil of secrecy in the different radical districts. Around Christmas time there was a secret delegate meeting at Nottingham where eight English and some few Scottish Counties were represented. Yorkshire sent two delegates, one of whom was William Logell of Wakefield. The Barnsley Secret Acting Committee gave him £3 for his expenses. At the meeting it was agreed to unite all the Union Societies into a single body

⁴⁰ P.R.O., H.O.40/16: Confessions; T.S.11/979 & 1013: Depositions of Thomas Morgan and Michael Downing, respectively.

and improve communication among the local branches. In the following months, therefore, delegates from each town constituted themselves into what they called the 'National Meeting' which met once a fortnight. At first they met in Leeds, but in February they moved to a secret venue in the vicinity of Huddersfield. The sole topic of their discussions was a plan for a national insurrection and the seizure of power in case the Government refused to accede to their demands.⁴¹

These developments affected the nature of events in the localities. There was a criss-crossing of secret messages, usually verbal, from one Union Society to another. In Barnsley the Secret Acting Committee constantly urged their members to secure arms, remain on the alert and beware of strangers who might betray them. To avoid dangerous leaks, the Secret Committee never allowed the General Committee to have the full details of the plan: "I understand, lads, you want to hear something from me. Yes, everything is ordered well and the time for rising is not far distant, but when and where, I will tell no man [now]." ⁴²

Despite the lack of details, the Radicals took their arming seriously. The sale of pikes and fire-arms became lucrative business and there were a few arsenals in and around the town. Arthur Collins, the man who had carried the Cap of Liberty at that impressively peaceful procession on November 8, 1819 was the greatest dealer in pikes. He ordered them from his brother-in-law, Sunderson of Sheffield, and distributed them among the Barnsley radicals. He is reported to have sold four hundred pikes altogether. Richard Hirst of Monk Bretton used his skill to repair guns

⁴¹ P.R.O., H.O.40/16: Confessions; H.O.40/12: Depositions of John Mitchell & Joshua Hirst; P.R.O., T.S.11/979 & 1013: Depositions of Thomas Morgan & Michael Downing, respectively; P.R.O., H.O.44/1: Barrat of Wakefield to Viscount Lascelles, Mar.19, 1819; the Home Office got intelligence of the Nottingham meeting about a week later: H.O.79/4.

⁴² P.R.O., T.S.11/979: Depositions of Thomas Morgan.

and sharpen blades. In Dodworth, John White, a blacksmith, allowed four of his fellow radicals to use his workshop in the manufacture of pikes. In the months of March and April 1820 there was a rush to buy arms. The cost of a pike was 1 shilling 6 pence, and that of a gun, together with a ball of cartridges, was 25 shillings. There was scarcely a radical who did not have a weapon of some description.⁴³

The Cato Street Conspiracy in London on February 23rd, which some historians have wrongly regarded as the end of post-war disturbances,⁴⁴ only inaugurated a period of military insurrections among the working-class radicals of Scotland and the north of England. On March 21st twenty-eight members of the Glasgow secret committee were arrested for plotting an armed rising. It seems that March 31st was the day appointed for the rising. On that day the weavers of Bolton struck work. From Bradford came reports that the town's radicals were planning to march on Leeds. In Wigan 300 men met on the moors but, since the turn-out fell short of the expected thousand or more, the 'affair' was called off. In Huddersfield a few armed men came out at night with an intention of capturing strategic positions in the town but, finding themselves too few, and realizing that the security forces were on the alert, the men retreated back to their homes. The Barnsley radicals were ordered by their Secret Acting Committee to "be ready," but as the expected signal did not arrive from Huddersfield, they made no move.⁴⁵ Scotland had a taste of real violence. Printed bills were published in Glasgow calling on the people to rise up in arms. In the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ White, op.cit., p.176.

⁴⁵ Thompson, op.cit., pp.769-780; F.K. Donnelly, "Chronology of Events: Feb.-April, 1820" (unpublished mimeo.); P.R.O., H.O.40/12: Depositions of Joshua Hirst; P.R.O., T.S.11/979: Depositions of Thomas Morgan.

following six days the Scottish radicals fought it out with the army.⁴⁶

Although the plan for a rising on March 31st was frustrated, the radicals did not give up; they looked forward to another occasion. A great deal of clandestine dealings between Barnsley and other areas, especially Huddersfield, went on even more intensely than before. On April 11th the Barnsley radicals learned that, the rising was to take place that night. There were a few movements in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Radicals in Manchester, Blackburn and Burnley who were preparing to come out, were warned off any action by an unusually brisk movement of troops.⁴⁷ In Sheffield 200-300 armed men marched on the barracks at night but when they found that the soldiers were on the alert, they retreated.⁴⁸ Earlier in the day the Huddersfield men had noticed troop patrols in the different parts of the town. They therefore recoiled from any action that evening. It was too late to warn their Barnsley colleagues.⁴⁹ The Barnsley radicals felt confident enough to go ahead with the insurrection.

On April 8th a 'stranger' arrived in Barnsley that day and demanded to see any member of the Secret Acting Committee. He was directed to James Lowe who then accompanied him to Huddersfield. When Lowe returned the next day, he told his fellow members of the Secret Acting Committee that the radicals of the northern districts were going to meet on Grange Moor at day break on April 12th. Grange Moor was a piece of waste ground 12 miles to the

⁴⁶ For an interesting, if partisan, account see P.B.Ellis & S. Mac A'ghobainn, The Scottish Insurrections of 1820 (1970).

⁴⁷ P.R.O., H.O.40/12: Manchester magistrates to Huddersfield Magistrates, April 11, 1820.

⁴⁸ F.K.Donnelly, "Popular Disturbances in Sheffield, 1790-1820" (unpublished M.A.thesis, University of Sheffield, 1970), p.90.

⁴⁹ The Manchester Observer, Ap.15, 1820, p.1.

north-west of Barnsley, on the highway from Wakefield to Huddersfield.

Some Committee members remained incredulous and, consequently, on April 10th Craven Crookson and Stephen Kitchenman went to Huddersfield to verify the plan. When they returned on April 11th, they expressed satisfaction with the arrangements. The day had come. At noon, on the same day, Ferrimond called a meeting of the Secret Acting Committee and ordered that the members of the General Committee also attend. At the meeting, the section leaders were instructed to inform their members to come out that evening, fully equiped and armed, and assemble on Bank Top, a mile south of Barnsley, from whence they would march on to Grange Moor. Everything was to be done as discreetly as possible. There was hardly enough time for the section leaders to inform all their men; some were hounded from their warm beds when the march to Grange Moor had already started.⁵⁰

The moonless and cloudy night of April 11th 1820 was probably the busiest night that the Barnsley radicals had yet experienced. Between nine and eleven o'clock three to five hundred men from Barnsley and its environs - especially Dodworth, Gawber, Monk Bretton, Burton and Ardsley, assembled, as instructed, on Bank Top, a field adjoining Mount Vernon on the Sheffield Road. Eighty men or so had earlier gathered on Jackson Square in Dodworth from where they marched to Barnsley with their women leading the way, holding lanterns to show them the route through the pitch-dark. The women then returned home, no doubt to pray for their husbands' victory. The men who came to Bank Top were armed to the teeth. Some carried guns, others had pikes, and most had knapsacks strapped to their backs with provisions, blankets, and spare clothing. They also brought drums, and banners, bearing

⁵⁰ P.R.O., T.S.11/979: Depositions of Thomas Morgan.

such inscriptions as: "May the Tree of Liberty spread its hands throughout the earth," or, "Hunt, the intrepid champion of the Rights and Liberties of the people," or, "You have condemned and killed the just and he doth not resist. He that hath no sword let him sell his garments and buy one."⁵¹

The party was divided up into companies and sections and accordingly lined up in pairs in preparation for their journey. The overall commander was one Willam Comstive, who was assisted by Richard Addy. Both men were veterans of the Napoleonic wars. Towards midnight the party commenced their march by moving northward towards Beachfield. Proceeding on their way, they turned into Doncaster Road and entered Barnsley town. Along Wellington Street, Union Row, Wilson's Piece, Pitt Street, and York Street, they called upon others who were probably less enthusiastic and asked, or forced, them to "turn out". They came to Coal-pit Hill where they paused for a while. By way of Jordan Hill, the party moved to Gawber and thence to Darton, Bretton West, Flockton and finally to Grange Moor. At several places along the line of march they halted near houses where fire-arms were likely to be found and, knocking up the terrified inmates, seized all they could find, and in one or two cases, supplied themselves with food from the larders.

At Grange Moor they were to meet a force of more than 30,000 consisting of a rebel army and fellow insurgents from all over the North, including Scotland. From Grange Moor the reinforced 'revolutionary army' was to proceed and capture, in turns, Huddersfield, Leeds, Wakefield, Barnsley and

⁵¹ The account of the Insurrection is drawn from various sources, mainly: T. Frost, in J. Wilkinson, op.cit., pp.211-214; Thompson, op.cit., pp.776-777; Anon. Sketches of Early Barnsley (n.d.), pp.11-12; P.R.O., H.O.40/12 & 16; H.O.44/2; & T.S.11/979 & 1013.

Sheffield from whence they would, together with the Midland forces, march on to London to demand their 'rights'. If Parliament refused to grant them, the insurgents would then overthrow the Government and set up a 'provisional government'. The Barnsley radicals had been warned by their 'Secret Acting Committee' that those who refused to go to Grange Moor "were to have no mercy shewn upon them", but "were to be put to the bayonet by the main body when they passed through Barnsley."⁵²

The Barnsley contingent reached the rendezvous about five o'clock in the morning. As they approached the place, the men saw not the encampment they had expected to find, but only the wide, dreary moor, overhung by a grey mist. The 30,000 forces were not in sight. An eye witness describes the dismal picture:

We expected to have met thirty thousand men - but there were only six and three of them had pikes. ... Some of [us] went to the six men to ask if they were all that were to meet us. They said others were in the village below and they would fetch them. They went and fetched about fourteen. Somebody asked if they were all that were to meet us. We began to be afraid. ⁵³

So, fear quickly spread through the crowd and everybody became restless. Some went into a nearby public house, 'The Black Bull', and forced Benjamin Nassey, the proprietor, to sell them beer. The panic-stricken gathering heard Thomas Ferrimond, one of their leaders, say: "Now, lads, that you are here, you have only to die once and you must either die here or at home." And Thomas Morgan, raising his gun, swore he would shoot the first man that attempted to run away. But few could contain themselves, and

⁵² P.R.O., T.S.11/979: Depositions of Thomas Morgan, Barnsley weaver, before Lord Lascelles.

⁵³ P.R.O., H.O.40/12: Depositions of John Mitchell, Barnsley weaver, before Stuart Corbett, J.P.

after about half an hour of nervous waiting, someone, who heard a sound of running horses, shouted, "We are sold." Then suddenly some threw down their arms, others broke their pikes, and most ran for their lives. Only a few remained on the moor. In a short time a detachment of yeomanry and dragoons from Huddersfield arrived on the scene and made fifteen arrests.⁵⁴ Then came the busy time for the magistrates.

From 12th to 14th April Barnsley was patrolled by troops and when the dragoons left, the Barnsley troop of yeomanry, under the command of Captain Edwards, policed the town for a further day. Special constables were also on duty. On April 15 Stuart Corbett, a magistrate, reported, "The town is now perfectly quiet and the plan of the Radicals thoroughly frustrated."⁵⁵ On the information supplied by seven frightened witnesses, the magistrates, between 12th and 14th April, issued warrants of arrests ^aagainst seventy-one people. On April 13th they issued search warrants against 46 people who were suspected of having pikes in their houses. Between April 12th and 20th the Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding and two of his magistrates, Dr. Stuart Corbett and Mr. Joseph Scott, recorded depositions of about fifty witnesses.⁵⁶

During the Summer Assizes, on July 19, 1820, twenty Grange Moor insurgents, two of them in absentia, were charged with High Treason. The accused were: William Comstive, Richard Addy, Charles Stanfield, Benjamine Hanson, James Flowers, Benjamin Rodgers, John Burkinshaw, Joseph Firth, John Vallance, John Ferrimond, Abraham Ingham, George Brien, John Hobson, George Burkinshaw, William Holland, Thomas Ferrimond, Michael Downing, all linen weavers;

⁵⁴ Ibid., Depositions of John Mitchell.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Stuart Corbett to Sidmouth, April 15, 1820.

⁵⁶ Depositions in P.R.O., T.S. 11/979 & H.O. 40/12. List of persons against whom search warrants were issued in H.O. 40/12.

Joseph Chapel, William Rice, cordwainers; and John Pickering, labourer.

Of these, Thomas Ferrimond and John Pickering were still on the run.

According to the indictment, these men

Not having the fear of God in their hearts, nor weighing the Duty of their Allegiance but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil as false traitors against... the King ... arrayed and armed in a warlike manner ... with Guns, Muskets, Blunderbusses, Pistols, Swords, Bayonets, Pikes, Pikeheads, Pitchforks, and other offensive weapons, ... did levy and make War against the King ... and did compass, imagine, invent, devise and intend to ... depose ... the King ... and levy war against the King in order, by Force and constraint, to compel him to change his Measures and Counsels. 57

The prisoners pleaded not guilty to the charges. A total of eighty-three witnesses were prepared by the prosecution. Before all the witnesses were cross-examined, however, the accused, on the advice of their attorney, Mr. Greaves, pleaded guilty in the hope that the court would exercise its clemency. But Justice Bayley put on his black cap and pronounced the death sentence on them. Later they were reprieved. Comstive, Addy, Stanfield, Chapel, Rogers, Rice and Burkinshaw were transported for life. The remainder were to be transported for fourteen years.⁵⁸ One of them, John Vallance, received royal pardon "in consequent of his good behaviour during his confinement on the York hulk at Gosport."⁵⁹ Even Thomas Ferrimond on the run did not escape the long arm of the law. He was caught in Whitehaven,⁶⁰ charged with high treason, and subsequently condemned to death during the Lent Assizes in 1821.⁶¹ Although for a few weeks after the Grange Moor insurrection there were rumours that radical

⁵⁷ Copy of the Indictment in P.R.O., T.S.11/1013.

⁵⁸ Burland, op.cit., p.399. The Leeds Mercury, July 22, 1820, p.3. and Sept.16, 1820, p.2.

⁵⁹ Frost, op.cit., p.221.

⁶⁰ P.R.O., H.O.64/1:Corbett to Sidmouth, Jan.25, 1821.

⁶¹ The Leeds Mercury, Mar.17, 1821, p.3.

delegates were active in Paisley, Glasgow and in some towns of Lancashire and the Midlands,⁶² radical activities ceased around this time. A Huddersfield magistrate was right when, commenting on the arrest of the Barnsley insurgents, he said: "I sincerely hope that radicalism has received a blow in this neighbourhood (and) that it will not soon recover."⁶³ For a decade or so Barnsley working-class radicalism slumbered in the doldrums. Before pursuing the implications of the 1820 radical defeat for the future, it is pertinent at this stage to explain and analyse the post-war working-class radicalism.

III. Towards an Explanation:

Overwhelming contemporary opinion was persuaded that the radicals acted not, as Justice Bayley believed, at "the instigation of the Devil" but rather under the direction of Government agents. The sensation caused by the revelation of Oliver's role in the conspiracies of 1817 is well known.⁶⁴ In June 1817 Earl Fitzwilliam, the Whig Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding, complained to the Home Secretary that Oliver was "an agent of sedition rather than an informer," ensnaring "the very lowest of orders" who were "few in number and contemptible in description and consideration." By spreading the idea of a central Revolutionary Committee in London, Oliver had helped to bring about the disturbances:

Have it loudly promulgated
that there is not in existence a
Revolutionary Committee in London - the

⁶² P.R.O., H.O.40/13: B. Haigh Allen to General Byng, May 5, 1820; H.O.40/12. General Byng to Sir Herbert Taylor, April 16, 1820.

⁶³ P.R.O., H.O.40/12: B. Haigh Allen to Sidmouth, April 12, 1820.

⁶⁴ See Thompson, op.cit., p.726f.

erroneous assumption and creed that
such a body is in existence and
in activity has kept alive in the
country the hopes and spirits of the
wicked - extinguish that hope, and
there will be an end to the Revolutionary
spirit in the country." 65

After the Grange Moor insurrection the radical Manchester Observer made an unequivocal condemnation of the Government for stagemanaging the insurrection through its agents provocateurs. The Barnsley men, the paper claimed, "were headed by a man on horse-back who, before they arrived at Grange Moor, very mysteriously made his disappearance."⁶⁶ An anonymous correspondent from Barnsley wrote in the Leeds Mercury that some days before the April 11th rising two men "with a broad Lancashire dialect", came into the town and applied for a few days' work for which they accepted only food in return. One was a weaver and the other was a gardener, and both claimed to have fled from political persecution. But, no sooner did they settle down than they introduced themselves to the Barnsley radicals and told them of a plan to meet 'the Scots army'. These same men, the correspondent alleged, had led the Barnsley insurgents to Grange Moor but "before the daylight in the morning, the instigators disappeared."⁶⁷

An allegorical account of the Barnsley rising, written nine years later, depicted the radicals as a set of gullible simpletons. Here is an extract:

When cuckoos visit our bless'd isle,
When liars simple men beguile;
Some of those rams, like carrion crows,
They disregarded human laws;
Like wild goats, they, the fence did skip,
No more on common grass to nip.

⁶⁵ P.R.O., H.O.42/167: Fitzwilliam to Sidmouth, June 17, 1817.

⁶⁶ The Manchester Observer, Ap.15, 1820, p.1. For a comparison with views on the Cato Street Conspiracy see The Republican, April 28, 1820, p.1.

⁶⁷ The Leeds Mercury, April 20, 1820, p.3.

Now those able, hot-brained cattle
Made their horns and hoofs to rattle;
Tho' it was dark, wet, stormy weather,
Ten score of them did spring together.
Now they advanced with all their might,
The clover field was then in sight;
And as they went they chewed their cud,
And said the clover would be good.
Upon the road their feet did clatter
And in this way they all did chatter.
.....

But as to Grange-moor they drew near,
The clover field did disappear, -
The hanging gardens lost their charms,
No more imagination warms.
The silver plums, and golden chains,
Existed only in their brains.
Sad desperation seized them all,
They broke their horns upon the wall:
The pinder smartly did attend them,
And to the pinfold he did send them. 68

Of the radical insurrections in the post-war period we have been told
in our own time, in a true Whig tradition, that

the evidence of any revolutionary
plot extending beyond one or two
tiny and uninfluential coteries is
wholly lacking. Nor is it possible
to find a single instance in which even
these little groups planned violent
measures save at the direct
instigation of the type of Oliver
and Edwards. 69

The suggestion that Home Office or magistrates' spies and agents had a
hand in radical activities is plausible. The point at issue is to what
extent these agents influenced the radicals' actions. The notorious Oliver
visited the Barnsley radicals, but the nature of his contact there is not
known.⁷⁰ The cloud which hung above the goings-on before the Grange Moor

⁶⁸ From Robert M'Lintock, "An Allegorical Account of the Radicals'
March from Barnsley to Grange Moor," in idem, Miscellaneous Poems
(Barnsley, 1839).

⁶⁹ Cole, loc.cit. Edwards was involved in the Cato Street Conspiracy.

⁷⁰ P.R.O., H.O.40/9: "Report of a Government Informer."

insurrection would appear to lend credibility to the suspicion that there were spies among the radicals. From March 31st, when a radical attack was repelled in Huddersfield, the magistrates of that town were always on the look out for another rising. They knew of the April 11th rising in advance. B. Haigh Allen, a Huddersfield magistrate, wrote to the Mayor of Leeds on April 11, "The rising of the disaffected is to take place tonight. ... We have arranged with General Byng to give them a warm reception."⁷¹ The strangers who talked to the Barnsley insurgents on Grange Moor were actually members of a reconnaissance party sent by the Huddersfield magistrates. These were then followed by Major de Bathe's forces who made a number of arrests.⁷²

There might have been a very remote possibility that the Barnsley men were booby-trapped so that they could be made examples of, but the evidence to support such a suggestion is very questionable and must be received with scepticism. It is not true that the insurgents were led by a man on horse-back who made a "very mysterious disappearance". Nor is there any substance in the claim that the men were led by strangers "with a broad Lancashire dialect". Overwhelming evidence from the depositions recorded by the magistrates proves that the leaders were from Barnsley.⁷³ There was, of course, a great deal of contact between Barnsley, Huddersfield, and other places, especially in Lancashire. It would appear the vigilant Huddersfield magistrates intercepted some of the messages through their own local spies. The Manchester authorities also knew about the April 11th plan in advance, and the evidence would indicate that the would-be insurgents in Lancashire

⁷¹ P.R.O., H.O.40/12. B. Haigh Allen to W.C. Beckett, Ap.11, 1820.

⁷² Ibid: Haigh Allen to Sidmouth, April 12, 1820. Major de Bathe to Sir Byng, Ibid.

⁷³ Depositions in P.R.O., H.O.40/12 & T.S.11/979.

⁷⁴ P.R.O., H.O.40/12: Letter from Manchester magistrates to Huddersfield magistrates, April 11, 1820.

were warned off by the unusual movements of troops that day.⁷⁴ If any agent provocateur instigated the Grange Moor insurrection, he was certainly not an employee of the Home Office. The latter, worried that if there was truth in the Leeds Mercury allegations that the Barnsley rising had been instigated by agents provocateurs it would lose the treason case against the Barnsley prisoners, urged the local magistrates to investigate the matter fully.⁷⁵

What seems to have been the case was that a genuinely conspiratorial movement was successfully penetrated by informers employed mainly by the local magistrates. In this respect the Huddersfield magistrates were more active than their Barnsley counterpart. One local study cannot satisfactorily reveal the extent of the conspiracy but there is abundant evidence, as the forgoing narrative of the radical activities would show, that there was a radical underground network which involved many localities. It was neither as elaborate nor as opaque as the zealous radicals deluded themselves into believing. So it got inextricably intertwined with the authorities' better financed spy system. A Huddersfield weaver arrested on April 14th - two days after Grange Moor - had written a letter which was captured before it was delivered:

Our brethren in Lancaster Shire,
Dearly beloved,
Our Musick in Yorkshire as played
twice where yours in Lancashire has
never struck at all is your Musicians
sick? ... About 300 at Grange Moor,
they marched all night ... it would
have tuck an affect on your feelings
to have seen the brave men stand
under their arms all that weet night
after a march of 12 miles and Not one
man to meet them according to

⁷⁴ P.R.O., H.O.40/12: Letter from Manchester magistrates to Huddersfield magistrates, April 11, 1820.

⁷⁵ P.R.O., H.O.79/4: Hobhouse to B. Haigh Allen, June 2, 1820.

Appointment ... I hope that we
may all meet in one Body and
one Voice yet. 76

Even Arthur Thistlewood's men in London had considerable contacts in both Scotland and the industrial north. Thistlewood's main contact in the West Riding was a W. Marshall of Leeds, formerly surgeon to the West Riding militia.⁷⁷

The suggestion that all these contacts were instigated by agents provocateurs, attractive as it is, is unacceptable on two grounds. First, as has been demonstrated, the evidence available leaves it a vexed question. It was a subject of rumour-mongering. The man who came to Barnsley before the rising, for example, was not a provocative gardener but, as the magistrates later found out, a Huddersfield radical named Joseph Pilling who went on the run.⁷⁸ Secondly, and more importantly, the agents provocateurs thesis turns the radicals into mere objects of manipulation. They are not regarded as historical agents with a desire to shape their own destiny. Even if we had incontrovertible evidence to prove that agents provocateurs were active among the radicals, we still have to explain why, after all, the radicals should have responded to their influence.

⁷⁶ Cited in Thompson, op.cit., p.777.

⁷⁷ P.R.O., H.O.79/4: Hobhouse to C. Beckett, Mar.8, 1820. See also Thompson, op.cit., pp.770f; T.M. Parssinen, "The Revolutionary Party in London, 1816-1820", Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, Vol.XLV No.112 (Nov.1972), p.278.

⁷⁸ P.R.O., H.O.40/13: B. Haigh Allen to Hobhouse, May 8, 1820.

An 'economic interpretation of social upheaval was, until recently, the most fashionable. Professor Rostow's 'social tension chart', which includes the period under discussion, is well known. According to the model, there is supposed to be a direct positive correlation between economic distress and mass discontent which leads to a state of unrest or disturbance in a society.⁷⁹ More sophisticated and more subtle analyses have been made; two of them deserve mention. The first is the so-called J-curve theory of rising expectations propounded by sociologist James Davies. According to the theory a revolutionary situation arises if "a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal."

The all-important effect on the minds of people in a particular society is to produce, during the former period, an expectation of continued ability to satisfy needs - which continue to rise - and, during the latter, a mental state of anxiety and frustration when manifest reality breaks away from anticipated reality."⁸⁰

The second may be termed an 'oscillation model'. In times of slump, when working-class industrial action would not be expected to win them any economic gains, the disaffected tend to engage in political action. But from the end of the slump, during the cyclical upswing, when an expected rise in economic gains is not realized, the working class usually take strike action as a means of improving their lot.⁸¹ To what extent was working-class radicalism a function of economic grievance in the period 1816-1820?

⁷⁹Rostow, op.cit., pp.121-124.

⁸⁰ James C. Davies, "Towards a Theory of Revolution", American Sociological Review, Vol.XXVII, No.1 (Feb.1962), p.6. To the extent that "social" development is also discussed, the model transcends a purely economic interpretation.

⁸¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Economic Fluctuations and some Social Movements", in Labouring Men (1968 ed.) p.132.

Although the Napoleonic wars were characterized by economic dislocation and crises, the last three years witnessed an economic recovery which reached its peak in 1815.⁸² In 1814 the Barnsley weavers got an advance in wages. The recovery engendered feelings of optimism - a belief that the beginning of peace would usher in an era of economic prosperity. That the opposite happened is well known. The economic downswing which started in 1815 reached its lowest point in 1816, a year when the Barnsley linen weavers had to submit to a piece-rate reduction. Here is how a joint statement of the Barnsley weavers in 1818 depicted the situation:

During the latter part of the late war,
there were few tradesmen who
did not anxiously and fondly
anticipate the blessings of peace;
"in the mind's eye," they saw
trade flourish and plenty bless
their once happy land; they looked
forward to this period as the
termination of their difficulties,
and expected then, at least to be
enabled to support themselves and
families with comfort and decency.
Delusive hope! for the laurel
had scarcely given place to the
olive before we were
obliged to submit to a reduction
of wages. ⁸³

It is therefore demonstrable that after the war (to quote Davies again) "manifest reality" broke away from "anticipated reality" and that a sense of frustration prevailed.⁸⁴ The years 1817-18 experienced high food prices,⁸⁵ and although most of 1818 saw brisk economic activity, workmen's

⁸² A.D.Gayer, W.W. Rostow & A.J. Schwartz, The Growth and Fluctuations of the British Economy, 1790-1850 (1953), p.110.

⁸³ The Leeds Mercury, Oct.31, 1818, p.1: original emphasis.

⁸⁴ See Eli Halevy, A History of the English People in the 19th century Vol.II: The Liberal Awakening (1949 ed.), pp.10f.

⁸⁵ Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, op.cit., pp.140f.

attempts to raise their wages through strike action were only partially successful and in some cases a complete failure.⁸⁶ From the end of 1818 Britain was hit by an international economic crisis which reached its lowest point in 1819.⁸⁷ This was the time when radical demonstrations occurred all over the industrial north. Towards the end of the year the demonstrations were superceded by military conspiracies. But at the time of the Barnsley insurrection, the town's staple industry was apparently on the upward trend. Denying that the insurrection had anything to do with economic distress, a local magistrate wrote:

Dr. Corbett and I have made diligent enquiry into the state of the linen trade, and rates of wages, and it is known to be good by all the manufacturers whom we have consulted. ... Barnsley has been less affected by the (bad) times than almost any other town in the North of England (and) work was always to be had when applied for, and wages have been amply sufficient. 88

The magistrate overstated his case, for the industry had not fully recovered. Moreover, the town was, at this time, in a state of flux owing to the arrival of work-seeking war veterans and immigrants from Lancashire, Ireland and the agricultural hinterland.⁸⁹

In this period, therefore, there existed considerable economic distress but the problem is that it is difficult to integrate it into any consistent pattern in relation to the contemporary social upheaval. Economic distress is a fundamental pre-condition for the rise of social protest, but why do

⁸⁶ See Chapter Six, Section II above.

⁸⁷ Gayer, Rostow & Schwartz, op.cit., p.110.

⁸⁸ P.R.O., H.O.40/12: Joseph Scott to Lord Lascelles, Ap.22, 1820.

⁸⁹ See Chapter One above, p.31.

people protest or rebel when they do and in the manner they do? An economic interpretation of social upheaval has three major difficulties. First, it offers no paradigm for universal application. Whereas the economic distress of 1810-1812 was marked by Luddism, that of 1819 was accompanied by an upsurge of political radicalism. Why did the working-class radicals change their mode of operation from constitutionalist protest in 1819 to insurrectionary conspiracy in 1820 when economic recovery was gathering momentum? After all, according to the 'oscillation model', this (1820) was the time when the working class should have resorted to industrial action. The second problem is that an economic interpretation on its own assumes that only economic grievances need evoke social protest. Such a crude economic determinism has been aptly described as the "spasmodic view" of historical man.⁹⁰ Lastly, even when other grievances are taken into account, no consideration is given to factors which mediate between grievances and response - in this case protest or rebellion. It is therefore, necessary, as one social historian has suggested, that to understand a social movement properly one must unravel "the complexities of motive, behaviour and function."⁹¹ Simplistic stimulus-response explanations would not do. One therefore needs to penetrate such explanations as economic determinism and the agents provocateurs thesis. One must reject the claim by some magistrates that the majority of the radicals, especially those who took part in the military conspiracies, had been 'intimidated' by the more extreme elements. Men who are intimidated do not spend their hard-earned cash in purchasing weapons. Nor do they spend their valuable free time in undergoing nocturnal military

⁹⁰ E.P.Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th century," Past and Present, No.50 (Feb.1971), p.76. See also George Rude, The Crowd in History, 1730-1848 (1966 ed.), p.219.

⁹¹ Thompson, "The moral economy ..." Ibid., p.78.

training over months and still keep this a secret as far as possible. There is need, therefore, to anatomise the working-class movement and find out what body of ideas oriented it and what the radicals hoped to achieve. It is also necessary to ask whether there were external forces which may have dictated, at least in part, the radicals' mode of conduct.

During the Barnsley radicals' march to Grange Moor, Joseph Chapel, a Barnsley insurgent, was asked by a bewildered Flockton woman what the stampede was about. "We are going to Grange Moor for liberty," he answered.⁹² Michael Downing, one of those transported because of the Rising, wrote to a friend from prison that the Radicals were after forcing the Government to repeal the Corn laws.⁹³ Others were equally inarticulate and even vague. Most witnesses examined by the magistrates said that they were going to demand their 'rights'. Their inability to articulate both their grievances and the purpose of their Rising should not necessarily speak for an emptiness in their actions. They were not as confused about their motives as their evidence - given under conditions of fear - might lead us to believe. They had discussed their problems in their 'class' meetings. They had listened to their leaders, Ferrimond, Collins, Richard Jackson (yet another linen weaver) and others, who addressed them

⁹² P.R.O., T.S.11/979: Depositions of Ann Brown.

⁹³ P.R.O., H.O.44/2: Downing to Campbell, Aug.21, 1820.

on:

the grievances of the Nation, the oppression of the poor, the Taxation and the National Debt - and what was laid upon necessities of life we could not do without, and how much better it would be if these things were to be done away with. They also talked about the corruption of Ministers and how many thousands a year was expended upon them and on pensions and places out of our earnings. 94

This nearly summed up the essence of their discontent. Obviously, it reflected the rhetoric of the Radical press which savaged 'Old Corruption' between 1816 and 1819. Cobbett's Addresses and Register, Wooller's Black Dwarf, Wade's Gorgon, Griffin's Cap of Liberty, Carlile's Republican, and Davidson's Medusa, all declared war on boroughmongering, lordcraft, priestcraft, taxation, profligacy and corruption. These papers did not speak with one voice. Carlile's republicanism was unacceptable to Cobbett, but in the mainstream of their analysis, the malpractices of Old Corruption were the sole explanation for the sufferings of the poor. The industrious classes toiled to produce the wealth of the nation but Old Corruption siphoned it off through taxation and spent it on wars, sinecures, pensions, places and extravagant living. This reckless expenditure of public funds raised the level of the National Debt and in turn led to more taxation. It was a vicious circle of exploitation for the labouring poor.⁹⁵

The exploitation of the poor, therefore, was not seen in the economic processes of production, distribution and exchange. In 1815 the landed class got the Corn Law to protect their interests. In 1816 both the landed

⁹⁴ P.R.O., T.S.11/979. Depositions of Thomas Morgan.

⁹⁵ A brilliant exposition of the rhetoric of the Radical press of the period is in P. Hollis, The Pauper Press (1970), pp.95-96, 203-211.

and manufacturing interests secured a repeal of direct taxation to ease their burdens. What did the industrious classes get? More indirect taxation on the necessities of life.⁹⁶ It seemed the explanation lay in the political process. The political community, consisting of the aristocracy, controlled the instruments of power, which power it used to tax the poor and legislate against their interests. A Barnsley manufacturer who in November 1819 had dismissed some of his workmen for attending a reform meeting in Sheffield received an anonymous letter in the hand-writing of none other than Thomas Ferrimond who said, among other things:

You say Reformers want to rob and
plunder your property (a vain thought)
I am sorry indeed that you should
let such hellish and demon like
thoughts enter within your Bosom,
do you think that man his Endowed
with no better a thinking than to
suppose a plundering and destroying
your Property would enable him to live
a more comfortable and Christian
like life, yes Sir, he his, he
knows it his a cursed Administration
of Government who his living upon the
vitals of the Country by an unjust
and overgrowing Taxation, with a Profligate
and wicked expenditure of the Public
Money upon unmeritted Pensions,
Sinecures and Placemen and a Parliament
that does not represent the People. 97

A Barnsley radical meeting in July 1819 was told by a speaker:

We see around us increasing distress, produced
by unequal legislation ... The landed interest
being possessed of the powers of making laws,
have made them to our sorrowful experience.
... For whose benefit were the corn laws passed?
Not for the labourers' but for the landholders'
.....
We as labourers are compelled to obey the laws
to support the burdens of the state. 98

⁹⁶ Halevy, op.cit., pp.3-9; Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement (1959), Chs. 3 & 4.

⁹⁷ Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I, Bundle 3: Anonymous letter to Edward Jackson dated Nov. 4th, 1819.

⁹⁸ Extracts from speech cited in Burland, op.cit., p.389.

So long as the labouring classes remained outside the political community, their interests would always be at the mercy of the selfish clique which controlled political power. The answer, therefore, lay in correcting the injustices of the political arrangement. This could only be achieved by parliamentary reform, since it was Parliament that passed all the obnoxious laws.

The whole Radical movement expressed dissatisfaction with the unrepresentative nature of Parliament. The Barnsley radicals were informed about the evils of boroughmongering. The example came from next door:

Is Barnsley represented? I have known an elector of Pontefract boast, that he, along with five others drank twenty-five bottles of wine in one day at the late election. A long purse might buy the borough of Pontefract; but it would not buy the West Riding of Yorkshire. 99

The middle-class Radicals wanted the political community to be enlarged in order to be more representative. To the working-class radicals, however, the political community could not but be total. Every man had a right to participate in the making of the laws which he was called upon to obey. This is why they called for universal suffrage. "We implore your Royal Highness", wrote the Barnsley radicals to the Prince Regent, "to grant unto us and our fellow subjects, the elective privilege; (so) that when you meet the Parliament, you may have the happiness to meet the whole Nation, and not a very small part thereof."¹⁰⁰ Annual parliaments and vote by ballot, two more of their demands, would guard against abuses and intimidation.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ The Leeds Mercury, Nov.13, 1819, p.4.

The right to be represented in Parliament was, therefore, not simply looked at as a means of easing the burdens of taxation, oppression and so on. It was regarded as every Englishman's inalienable right. The people were sovereign. Through reading Cobbett the radicals were imbued with the concept of the 'Norman Yoke'. The power of the people had been usurped and the true English constitution violated by self-seekers.¹⁰¹ The Barnsley address to the Prince Regent was unambiguous on this point: "We pray your Royal Highness to regard us as the legitimate children of the loyal ancestors who placed your family on the British Throne to protect the lives, property and liberty of British subjects."¹⁰² A speaker at a Barnsley radical gathering articulated the argument:

The principles of nature teach us that no man has any right to usurp any authority over another. Government was designed for the protection of the whole community. Any man who professes to derive his authority from any source (other) than the people, can only be considered as a usurper. The people ought to have the right of choosing those who ought to be the guardians and judges of their property, liberty and life, they ought also to have the right to determine how long the authority they give, shall be retained. ¹⁰³.

Their rhetoric was a blend of Cobbett's 'historical' rights and Paine's 'natural' rights to be represented.¹⁰⁴

So the whole struggle was for an economic as well as a political existence. The two issues were inseparable. Although there were other ideas which penetrated the Radical movement, it would appear that the above framework of analysis was the mainstream of working-class radical thought. The Barnsley sources do not reveal working-class espousal of republicanism,

¹⁰¹ See Christopher Hill, "The Norman Yoke," in John Saville (ed.) Democracy and the Labour Movement (1954), pp.11-66, esp. pp.42-60.

¹⁰² The Leeds Mercury, Nov.13, 1819, p.4.

¹⁰³ Burland, op.cit., p.388.

¹⁰⁴ See Hill, op.cit., p.55 et passim. Thomas Paine, Rights of Man (1969 ed. Henry Collins), pp.86ff.

socialism or anti-clericalism - though these ideas were expressed in many a working-class journal.

On the whole, therefore, it could be said that the movement was reformist rather than revolutionary. It accepted the general framework of the political institutions but sought to restore their pristine purity.¹⁰⁵ The English Constitution, if properly conducted, would guarantee maximum liberty for every Englishman. What was needed was to stop the abuses which had crept into constitutional practice. This is why the petition became the modus operandi in the radicals' struggle for restitution. The movement counted on the readiness of Parliament to reform itself - on the ability of the usurpers to see where they had gone wrong. Their motive was to gain admission into the institutions of power and not to wrest these institutions from those who controlled them. Although this was the dominant ideology, the concept of the seizure of power was a familiar one, for the 'Glorious' and, more significantly, French Revolutions were always in the back of their minds. The Grange Moor insurgents intended to 'demand' their 'rights' once they had reached London, failing which they would then set up a 'Provisional Government'.

Working-class radical activities between 1816 and 1820 are characterized by an oscillation between open 'constitutionalist' protest and underhand military conspiracy. The evidence reveals a strong role played by the policy of repression in determining this oscillation. The clandestine 'delegate' meetings which involved, on the one hand, people like Oliver and, on the other, genuine radicals like Thomas Ferrimond or Jeremiah Brandreth,

¹⁰⁵ See Eric J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (1971 ed.), p.7.

took place after the passing of the 'Gagging Acts'. Habeas Corpus had been suspended, public meetings banned, and the radical press silenced. When the last of the Gagging Acts expired, the radical movement was open and peaceable. But Peterloo, the Six Acts and the trial of the Peterloo martyrs drove plebeian radicalism underground. When given an opportunity, the radicals held public meetings and demonstrations to impress the establishment with their numerical strength, their respectability, and their ability to observe the law. But when repression made this difficult, it was possible, within the framework of radical ideology, to justify a recourse to arms in defense of liberty. After Peterloo, Arthur Collins, distributed pamphlets in Barnsley which argued for the Englishman's right of rebellion against tyranny.¹⁰⁶

In a nutshell the working-class radical movement was a product of grievances of economic, political and social dimensions. It was richly nourished by the compelling exhortations of the radical press and the radical orators, and by memories of past struggles, especially the French Revolution. Its conduct was at times dictated by the stiff-handed policy of repression. To understand fully the character of the movement we must move on to examine its leadership and its membership.

¹⁰⁶ P.R.O., H.O.40/16: Confessions.

IV: The Radicals:

Working-class radicals can be divided into leadership and membership. The outlook of the movement was reflected in the leadership that was accepted as opposed to that which was rejected. Although favourable working-class response was very occasionally evoked by such middle-class reformers as Edward Baines, such elements, as opposed to universal suffrage as was 'Old Corruption', did not influence working-class radical thought or action and were many times repudiated. The leadership that was accepted was of three types: The first was what we may call 'intellectual' or 'ideological' leadership. It was, in the main, given by the editors of the radical press. By providing the radicals with a consistent framework of analysis, the radical press, more than anything else, did a great deal to orient the thinking in the movement. The weekly 'class' meetings ensured considerable exposure to the ideas of this press. William Cobbett spearheaded this 'intellectual' revolution and gave the movement a sense of direction and unity of purpose.

The second type of leadership was the national leadership which consisted of prominent London radicals: Henry Hunt, Major Cartwright and, probably, Arthur Thistlewood. These were men with a large following in the industrial districts. Their function was more symbolic than real. They assumed the position of a father figure and turned into a national movement what would otherwise have remained a haphazard collection of local groupings. Major Cartwright never visited Barnsley but his 'Address to the Nation' was enthusiastically received and unanimously adopted on July 12, 1819. Thomas Ferrimond was the only Barnsley radical personally known to Henry Hunt.¹⁰⁷ Yet one of the flags which frequently appeared at their

¹⁰⁷ P.R.O., H.O.40/16: Confessions. Ferrimond was introduced to Henry Hunt during a radical delegate meeting at Manchester, one week before Peterloo.

demonstrations read: "Hunt, the intrepid Champion of the Rights and Liberties of the People."

The final kind of leadership was definitely the most important. This was the local leadership on whom fell the burden of running the day to day business of the movement. Thomas Ferrimond, Thomas Ashurst, James Lowe or Benjamin Rodgers were all hand-loom weavers who had to ply the loom for fifteen hours a day in order to make both ends meet. Still, they were dedicated enough to attend to the business of their Union Society. They could easily have absconded with the Society's funds, probably without a trace, but they handled everything with remarkable honesty. It was at this level that funds were collected, papers distributed, meetings organised, arms procured, and local support mobilized. It is for this reason that we shall now turn to the men, the flesh and blood, that made up the radical movement.

Literary sources indicate that the overwhelming majority of the Barnsley radicals were linen weavers.¹⁰⁸ This is hardly surprising, since linen weaving was the staple industry of the town. The scattered figures available would tend to confirm this. Among the twenty insurgents accused of High Treason at the York Assizes, seventeen of them were linen hand-loom weavers, two were cordwainers and one was a labourer. Figures involving a larger sample show the same pattern. Of the forty-seven

¹⁰⁸ P.R.O., H.O.40/12. Stuart Corbett to Sidmouth, Ap.15, 1820.

arrested or examined after the Grange Moor Insurrection, thirty-six were linen weavers, five were colliers, two were blacksmiths, two were cordwainers and two were labourers.¹⁰⁹ It cannot be claimed that these are representative samples by strict standards of statistical analysis but they are, nevertheless, the only ones available and one cannot ignore the pattern they reveal. The simple observation here is that the movement was dominated by people in occupational groups which earned their living by the sale of their labour power, and in which there was virtually no upward social mobility.¹¹⁰

To say that the radicals came from occupations (especially hand-loom linen weaving) which at this time permitted of no upward social mobility is not to imply that they were an ignorant set of men. On the contrary, the available data, scanty though it is, shows that the hard core of the movement consisted of men who pursued self-improvement as indicated by the high literacy rate among them. The 24 prisoners at York Castle, who were awaiting trial in connection with the Grange Moor Insurrection, sent a petition to the Home Office on May 29th 1820 asking to be allowed visits by relatives apart from their wives who were already allowed by the regulations. Of these, 17 men, or 71 per cent, were able to sign the petition in clear legible handwriting.¹¹¹ Most of them had obviously improved on their Sunday School education. In this respect, the 'Dissent connection' of many of them seems to have been instrumental. The radical class meetings, in which radical journals were read and discussed, certainly had a Methodist origin. Commenting on the activities of the Barnsley Union Society in 1819 the magistrate, Stuart Corbett said:

I have further to remark that
this Union at Barnsley is intensified,

¹⁰⁹ P.R.O., T.S.11/1013.

¹¹⁰ See Chapters Two and Three above.

¹¹¹ P.R.O., H.O.20/1.

or nearly so, with a Religious Sect called Kilhamites, or sort of Dissenters from Methodism but who, with their teachers, are of the lowest of ignorant and gross enthusiasts. 112

Joseph Beckett claimed that there were two non-conformist meeting houses in the town "where the speakers are continually harrowing the most horrid feelings against the Government." Ferrimond and "the Non-Conformist preachers", he alleged, were "instilling notions of injury done to them by the Government and 'the tyrants' into the minds of the lower orders, that never will be effaced."¹¹³ There is some statistical ground for taking these allegations seriously. Seven of those charged with High Treason on account of the Grange Moor insurrection, including the radical leader Thomas Ferrimond, had had their children christened in the New Street New Connection (Kilhamite) Methodist chapel.¹¹⁴ A similar analysis of the baptismal registers of the other dissenting chapels does not yield such a high proportion. In fact, only three other names have been traced - two with the Independent Calvinistic Chapel and one with the Wesleyan Chapel.¹¹⁵

Three other elements in the working-class radical movement can be identified: hand-loom weavers who immigrated from Lancashire; people with an Irish background; and veterans of the Napoleonic wars. Thomas Ferrimond, Secretary of the Barnsley Union Society and many times a delegate at radical meetings, was born at Lamberhead Green, near Wigan in Lancashire.

¹¹² P.R.O., H.O.42/200: Stuart Corbett to Stuart Wortley, Dec.8, 1819.

¹¹³ Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I, Beckett to Lascelles, Dec.5, 1819.

¹¹⁴ P.R.O., R.G.4/3645: "New Street Methodist New Connection, Baptismal Records, 1797-1837."

¹¹⁵ P.R.O., R.G.4/3285: Independent Chapel, Baptisms & Wesleyan Baptismal Register (MS., B.R.L.).

He was apprenticed to his father as a weaver and came to Barnsley at the age of forty. His son, John, convicted like his father for his part in the Grange Moor insurrection, was also born in Lancashire.¹¹⁶ John Vallance, another 1820 insurgent, who later became prominent in the Chartist movement, also originated from Lancashire. He came to Barnsley in 1813. William Rice and Charles Stanfield, sentenced to transportation, had also come from Lancashire; so had William Comstive, the insurgents' military commander.¹¹⁷ Linen hand-loom weaving was relatively more prosperous than cotton hand weaving at this time. It had attracted former cotton weavers from Lancashire who may have brought with them a 'free-born Englishman' tradition, originating probably from the days of the 'United Englishmen' - the men who gave a hard time to Colonel Fletcher.¹¹⁸ There were also people of Irish origin who were prominent in the movement. Arthur Collins, the man who addressed meetings and built up an arsenal of pikes and guns, was an Irishman by birth. He was later to figure prominently in Chartism. Michael Downing, one of those transported for seven years was also Irish. William Comstive, Richard Addy and Michael Downing had all been discharged from the armed forces during the Napoleonic wars.¹¹⁹ It is difficult to draw a firm conclusion from these facts but one may suggest, though not glibly, that two of the strands in the radical movement were: 1) a historical connection with the politics of protest, in this case in Lancashire and Ireland; and 2) a service with the armed forces which may have ended in total disillusionment

¹¹⁶ P.R.O., H.O.40/16: Confessions.

¹¹⁷ T. Frost in Wilkinson, op.cit., p.214.

¹¹⁸ See Thompson, The Making op.cit., pp.188f. et passim; Donnelly & Baxter, op.cit., pp.127-129.

¹¹⁹ P.R.O., H.O.40/13 & H.O.44/2.

with the establishment. The majority of the radicals almost certainly fall into neither of these categories but these are elements worthy of note.

Because the Barnsley radicals turned up for their part in the 'revolution', historians could easily be tempted to see them as heroic men who could not be over-awed. For all the military preparedness and the 'class-room' sabre-rattling, when the time came, most of them showed little courage. A number of them either did not show up or secretly withdrew from the march to Grange Moor and went to hide in their beds or take cover in the trenches. Only about a third turned up. Most of those examined by the magistrates claimed to have been intimidated into joining the insurrection.¹²⁰ More than ten stayed in hiding for many days after the incident, and when they were caught, they gave evidence which incriminated their friends. Those who escaped conviction never submitted a petition on behalf of their condemned colleagues. Some specific cases are particularly interesting.

While awaiting trial, William Comstive, the insurgents' military commander, wrote to a former colleague in the 29th Regiment asking him to request the officers of Comstive's former regiment to report on his good conduct during his time of service. Comstive hoped that such a report might help him obtain mercy at his trial. His letter gave the impression that he had been dragged into the rising:

The day and night of the 11th April last it was reported that people who call themselves reformers or Radicals was going to have a meeting on Grange Moor. ... So on the night of 11th April there was

¹²⁰ Depositions in P.R.O., T.S.11/979 and H.O.40/12.

several people making use of the word "Turn out".
So I ran out, and was desired to come along with
them and accordingly went to Grange Moor. 121

Michael Downing, sentenced to transportation, had had more than ten years of one frustration after another and one would have expected him to be a hardened 'revolutionary'. He was born in Ireland, joined the 38th Wexford Regiment of Militia when he was young, and later transferred to the 81st Regiment. He served in Ireland, Scotland, England and the East Indies. He was discharged in 1806 and came to Barnsley when he was virtually a pauper. After two years as a weaver, he worked four years in Northumberland as a hawker and a casual labourer, but later returned to linen weaving in Monk-Bretton near Barnsley. He actively participated in the radical discussions as a 'class' leader and in the military exercises that preceded the Rising. After the insurrection, when he heard there was a warrant of arrest against him, he hid in the woods for a number of days. His depositions incriminated many radicals who would otherwise not have been prosecuted.¹²² In the letters he wrote while awaiting trial, he came out with the most vicious diatribe against his fellow radicals. He regretted having settled

among a set of indolent and treacherous people as I
may call them for they might get a genteel life if
they were industrious inclined without frowning or
grumbling or without taking up arms against their
King and the laws of the land.

He called the discontented:

the idlers, the drunkards and female free gangsters
... These are the oppressors of the land and which
makes the industrious think that all the money that

¹²¹ P.R.O., H.O.40/13: William Comstive to William Whalley, May 20, 1820.

¹²² P.R.O., T.S.11/979. Depositions of Michael Downing.

is collected goes to support the ministers and place-men and king. ... What would support the navy or keep the military or punish depredators or keep out invaders of our land? ... God forbid such rules of people should govern our land. 123

This sounds like the confession of 'the saved'! Perhaps Downing hoped that the authorities might lay their hands on the letter and let him off the hook. In another letter Downing unleashed a wholesale condemnation of the Radical leadership (with whose names he was well versed):

What do you think now of Sir Francis
Burdett, Henry Hunt, Charles Walesley,
Wooler, Hobhouse, Mason, drumming Jackson,
Mjr. Cartwright, Mitchell, Johnston,
Collins, Ferrimond and the reverend
Mr. Ellis of Barnsley and Esquire Payne
of New Hall, with that most vile traitor
Cobbett and his hell burning ashes of
Tom Paine with all the rest of their
gigantic Pan-moral harlequin Political
stage, corrupting speeches against
God and the lawful laws of the land.
... These invaders of religion and justice
and piety and industry and the
peaceful minds...

"Good God," the letter concluded, "what should become of us when neither King nor Bishop! ... Henry Hunt and his confederates has corrupted this empire."¹²⁴

Perhaps the most dramatic story is that of the renowned Barnsley overall leader, Thomas Ferrimond. He was the most popular and most influential of the local leaders. He even had a sobriquet, "Ferryman", which the radicals used to shout every time he stepped onto a platform. In 1819 the local 'worthy', Joseph Beckett informed the Lord Lieutenant:

Who is this Ferrimond, I hear you ask?
Why, he is an operative weaver, more

¹²³ P.R.O., H.O.44/2: Downing to Campbell, Aug.21, 1820.

¹²⁴ Ibid. Downing to Sullivan, Aug.22, 1820.

bit with politicks than ever Don Quixote
was with knights errantry. ... He has
an eye in his head such as I never
saw a fellow to Town politicks, and his
eye contracts and dilates like a bat's
eye. He can speak, and tells his hearers
how bountiful Providence has been
- how enviable this nation once
was. Now how cursed! The common
people hear him with admiration.
He is notorious in his rank of life
as H. Hunt and the Major. 125

Ferrimond brought quill and paper to Grange Moor because he had expected to act as secretary to the 'Provisional Government'. After the abortive rising, he went into hiding in Royston, near Oldham, and later in Whitefield, Liverpool, Kendall, Ulverston and, finally, Whitehaven. He was the most wanted of the Radical leaders; the Government put a price of £100 on his head. He was apprehended in Whitehaven after nearly five months of hiding. It is almost certain that during this period he received help from his radical contacts in Lancashire.

In his depositions, Ferrimond gave a full account of the radical activities since 1816 but was careful to minimize his own role in the conspiracies. His confessions greatly augmented the Home Office 'Index to Offenders' which was kept from 1816 to 1826.¹²⁶ Concerning the Insurrection, he had the courage to claim: "I objected to go but they said it was useless. I was fixed upon and must go and dare not refuse."¹²⁷ While he was awaiting trial, he began inventing stories which he hoped might help him out. He wrote to the Home Secretary "revealing" a "Plot" of "a very serious

¹²⁵ Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I, Beckett to Lascelles, Dec. 5, 1819.

¹²⁶ P.R.O., H.O. 40/5 (7): "Index to Offenders." The 'Index' contained 136 names, 27 of which came from Ferrimond's confessions. See also H.O. 40/16: Confessions.

¹²⁷ P.R.O., H.O. 40/16: Confessions.

and bloody nature, and disgraceful to human society." He alleged that a group of extreme radicals were "determined to fall on the magistrates by a secret surprise and assassinate them in the night, all over the country at one time." He claimed that two representatives of these plotters went to recruit him in Barnsley before the Grange Moor Insurrection but that he replied he would have nothing to do with their plot. He gave a firm warning to the Home Secretary:

Your Lordship may firmly expect that there will be a stroke of vengeance, at a time most unexpected, and one, the most bloody, and secret if it is not prevented by some wise, and judicious measures.

He then offered his kind services to His Lordship:

... if with my liberty, a little money, as I am a poor man, for I could not go, amongst them into different parts to know all things without going once through afterwards. I could get a communication - and I would act faithfully and with the greatest secrecy to you. 128

As the magistrates later informed the Home Office, the "Plot" was a figment of Ferrimond's clever imagination designed to rescue him from the gallows. His Lordship did not take his offer into consideration. He was sentenced to death in March 1821. The sources do not say whether he was executed, but it would appear that, like some of his fellow insurgents, he was transported for life.¹²⁹

At this juncture, one would be tempted to dismiss the Barnsley radicals as a pack of simpletons, who ventured into acts of apparent boldness but who, at the crucial moment, could not stand by what they believed - if they believed in anything. The allegorical account of the Grange Moor insurrection, already referred to, depicted the radicals in that way:

One day, in words, they conquer all,
Next day, without a stroke they fall:

¹²⁸ Ibid., Ferrimond to Lord Sidmouth, Feb.15, 1821.

¹²⁹ See Ibid.: appeal of Dr. Corbett, magistrate, to Hobhouse, Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, April 14, 1821.

One moment they are in the sky,
Next moment in a dungeon lie.
Poor Radicals! in notions wild
In knowledge weaker than a child.
In politics a barber's block;
In battle lighter than a cork;
In words a monster with vain chat;
In vision blinder than a bat.
What is your skill, what is your power?
A mushroom blasted in an hour. 130

Such a judgement is neither fair nor perceptive. The Grange Moor prisoners suddenly found themselves abandoned, dejected, alone. We would, therefore, expect them to have felt demoralized and afraid for their lives. Michael Downing felt

Rejected, abandoned, Broken hearted
desconsolate (disconsolate), Misfortunate,
misrepresented man as I am that
has neither friends nor money
at this tremendous and awful time
Abandoned even by my own wife. 131

Commenting on those who gave evidence against him and his fellow prisoners, William Comstive said that they (the witnesses) did so to

rob parents of their near and dear
children to tear Husbands from their
almost heart-broken wives and snatch
from poor innocent harmless and much
distressed babes and half-starved infants
their wronged and unfortunate fathers.
... Teators (traitors) Tools Butchers
and nothing less than cloaked murderers... 132

The radicals' insurrection was not an act of adventurism: nor was it a creation of the agents provocateurs. It was a lost rebellion against a system which they knew to be manifestly unfair. The rebellion was lost because the radicals were ill-prepared for it. The might and alertness of 'the powers that be' were greater than the radicals' 'revolutionary' zeal had allowed them to foresee. It is important to note that some of the

¹³⁰ M'Lintock, op.cit., p.9.

¹³¹ P.R.O., H.O.44/2: Downing to Sullivan, Aug.22, 1820.

¹³² P.R.O., H.O.20/1: Comstive to Hamworth, July 20, 1820.

participants in the 1816-1820 radicalism, including the insurrection, pursued the radical cause for many years afterwards. Men like John Vallance or Arthur Collins were in the vanguard of the Chartist movement. They were certainly not "blasted in an hour."

We have come far enough to attempt to answer the remaining two of the questions posed in the introduction to the chapter: 1) whether the post-war radicalism constituted a revolutionary situation which, somehow, was aborted and 2) whether this radicalism was merely an extension of late 18th century radicalism? Revolution is a very elastic term, but, for the purpose of our discussion, we shall define a revolutionary situation as one which is capable of leading to a sudden and violent overthrow of the existing political and social order and which, through the redistribution and restructuring of economic and political power, constitutes a new one.¹³³ This definition implies two things: first, that the revolutionary movement has a theoretical base for an alternative order of society, and secondly, that it is physically capable of executing and sustaining a revolution. The 1816-1820 working-class radical movement certainly made a critique of existing society and expressed the new socio-political order which it desired to bring about. Basically the radicals saw the existing arrangement as a politically-endorsed system of economic exploitation. They sought to correct the arrangement by bringing to an end the monopoly of political

¹³³ For some definitional problems see Crane Brinton, The Anatomy of Revolution (New York, 1965 ed.), pp.3ff.

power and restoring the rights of the 'free-born Englishman'. But from a classical revolutionary standpoint the figure that emasculated this radical movement was the free-born Englishman: the hope of regeneration could be a break upon revolutionary determination. To the radicals, the English Constitution was sacrosanct; what was needed was to restore it to its pristine purity. The ease with which the radicals' boldness melted away in the heat of authority's repression would probably suggest that they were physically ill-prepared to take on Old Corruption.

Was the post-war movement the 'Old Radicalism' of the Corresponding and Constitutional Societies - an 18th century outcrop on the 19th century political landscape? Similarities between the two periods are very striking: the attack on aristocratic privilege, the discussion groups, the monster demonstrations (when they were not suppressed), the conspiracies, the petitions, and the same rallying cry: annual parliaments, the ballot and universal suffrage.¹³⁴ Yet the radicalism of 1816-1818 was different. From the 1770's one sees a transformation of the agitation for political reform. The radicalism of Wilkes and Wyvill was in the hands of 'respectable' gentlemen who favoured only moderate reform.¹³⁵ Their contemporaries, like Burgh, Hulme and Cartwright, who advocated more far-reaching reforms, were also gentlemen.¹³⁶ But in the 1790's, with the coming of the Correspondence and Constitutional Societies, the movement for parliamentary reform passed from gentlemen to workingmen. The backbone of the radicalism of this period, however, tended to be skilled artisans in traditional

¹³⁴ See Thompson, The Making, op.cit., Chs. 4 & 5.

¹³⁵ See Ian R. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, The Parliamentary Reform Movement in British Politics, 1760-1785 (1962), Ch.VII et passim; T.M. Parssinen, "Association, Convention and Anti-Parliament in British radical politics, 1771-1848," English Historical Review, Vol.88 (1973), p.509.

¹³⁶ Parssinen, Ibid., pp.505-509.

industries which permitted a degree of upward social mobility, where journeymen still entertained the hope of becoming small independent masters. Such men were, for example, the London tailors, watch-makers and shoe-makers;¹³⁷ the Sheffield cutlers;¹³⁸ and the Norwich artisans and tradesmen, "with strong traditions of independence."¹³⁹ By the end of the Napoleonic wars the radical ideas had percolated down to, and taken root in, the menu people - the early generation of the industrial proletariat, separated by a yawning chasm from the ownership of the means of production. Such people were the Barnsley linen weavers or the Lancashire labourers and cotton hand-loom weavers who, as Bamford informs us, voraciously read the radical journals and held torch-light meetings.¹⁴⁰ These men no longer operated on the fringes of the radical movement, bursting in for an occasional riot. They were in the movement to stay and, indeed, constituted the backbone of Chartism. In 1792 Tom Paine was burned in effigy in Barnsley;¹⁴¹ but in 1819 or 1839 no Church-and-King crowd was in sight.

After Grange Moor, Barnsley working-class radicalism seemed to have been silenced. The most that the radicals could do was to help, financially or otherwise, the families of the Grange Moor prisoners.¹⁴² But even in this, they tried to be as discreet as possible. No one dared sign a

¹³⁷ Thompson, The Making, op.cit., p.170.

¹³⁸ See Sidney Pollard, History of Labour in Sheffield (Liverpool, 1959), p.3; Gwyn A. Williams, Artisans & Sans-Culottes (1968), pp.60-63.

¹³⁹ Thompson, The Making, op.cit., p.131.

¹⁴⁰ Samuel Bamford, Passages in the Life of a Radical (1967 ed.), pp.13-16.

¹⁴¹ F.K.Donnelly, "Thomas Paine and English Radicalism," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No.29 (Autumn 1974), p.78.

¹⁴² P.R.O., H.O.20/1: John Ferrimond to his mother: May 22, 1820.

petition, for example, to request for the prisoners' release. In the town steps were taken to minimize the chances of a future insurrection.

Joseph Beckett lobbied the Lord Lieutenant for a Commission of the Peace. He argued that, if there had been a resident magistrate in the town, the insurrection would not have taken place:

Your Lordship must allow it the better part of discretion to use means to prevent rather than permit crime. And what would become of the fine feelings of the King, if it were made out to him that a subject had suffered for want of ordinary circumvention. Here we are the Israelites without a King, and no wonder that the place is a hot bed for Radicalism. 143

Beckett was highly recommended by other 'worthies',¹⁴⁴ and was eventually appointed magistrate in 1822. In 1821 the 'principal inhabitants' formed a Gas Light Company one of whose chief functions was to light the streets and render them safe at night.¹⁴⁵ In 1822 they obtained a local Improvement Act which contained clauses for the watching of the town, the prevention of nuisances and the preservation of the peace.¹⁴⁶

If working-class radicalism was silenced by authority's repression, it was not completely crushed. Throughout the 1820's it was an incipient force which occasionally found vent in industrial action.¹⁴⁷ And, as we shall see in the next chapter, it re-emerged with greater vigour in the 1830's.

¹⁴³ Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I, Beckett to Lord Harewood, May 15, 1820.

¹⁴⁴ P.R.O., H.O. 52/1: W. Lees (Deputy Lieutenant of the Riding) to Lord Sidmouth, April 14, 1820. When the radical movement began, the 'principal inhabitants' unsuccessfully applied for a resident Commissioner of the Peace: Memorial to Earl Fitzwilliam, Sheffield Archives, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, F51 (K).

¹⁴⁵ 1 & 2 Geo. IV, Cap. 75.

¹⁴⁶ 3 Geo. IV, Cap. 25.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter Six, Sections III to V above.

CHAPTER NINE

THE RISE AND FALL OF CHARTISM.

The hand of oppressors, though it may be heavy upon us, can never erase from our hearts those undying principles of liberty which we have been bold to acknowledge, and which we have sworn to defend before the high altar of the God of Nature. ... All parties at their commencement meet with enmity and opposition. All men in all countries who have fought for liberty have been branded as traitors, and many have died in ignominy. Wallace was hanged and quartered. Washington was called a rebel; Hampden was persecuted; Tell was treated worse than a robber. Emmet was executed; Paine was scouted and humbled like a thief; Cobbet was imprisoned; Hunt suffered a martyrdom of his lifetime. The great and good of all nations have been loaded with infamy. But years roll on, prejudice and malice are blown away, and their names are encircled with immortal glory. Let us not through the dread of present suffering, turn away our eyes from the brightness of the future. The sun of liberty rises, and we must hail his coming.

(Amos Maudsley, Barnsley Chartist, 1839)

I. Local Chartism in Perspective:

With the most recent general account of Chartism,¹ the study of the movement seems to have moved full-circle since Mark Hovell's book² was published. These two works constitute a good summary of the most popular composite version of Chartist history which can be aptly termed the 'rationalists, demagogues and the rabble' version. According to this composite version, the London and Birmingham radical craftsmen, artisans and shopkeepers - rational, well-educated and sophisticated - provided the Chartist movement with a programme and helped to organise the working class

¹ J.T. Ward, Chartism (1973).

² Mark Hovell, The Chartist Movement, (Manchester, 1918); references in this study will be to the 1925 edition.

in the industrial districts. But once they had set the Chartist train in motion, the popular demagogues - especially J.R. Stephens, Richard Oastler, Henry Vincent, Julian Harney and, most notorious of all, Feargus O'Connor - took over the leadership of the working class. The factory hands and outworkers, especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire, desperate at their economic plight, preferred the heady language of these rabble-rousing demagogues to the rationalist arguments of the London and Birmingham radicals.³

A leading characteristic of this version has been an unduly detailed account of the activities of the London Working Men's Association, the Birmingham Political Union, and the careers of such individuals as O'Connor, Lovett or J.R. Stephens at the expense of Chartist 'branch life'. Chartism failed on account of the disagreements between these quarrelsome leaders. The working class in the industrial districts come into the story as riotous mobs or bands of insurrectionary conspirators, responding more to the promptings which men share with animals than to distinctively human ideals. Ideas, we are told, "were not the most important elements in the political equation."⁴ In the words of Mark Hovell:

Chartism was in the manufacturing
areas a cry of distress, the shout
of men, women and children
drowning in deep waters rather
than the reasoned logical creed
of Lovett. ... Impatience, engendered
by fireless grates and breakfastless
tables, was the driving force of
much northern Chartism. 5

³ Ibid. (1925 ed.), pp. 98, 118, et passim; Ward, op.cit., Chs. 4 & 5; Thomas M. Kemnitz & Fleurage Jacques, "J.R. Stephens and the Chartist Movement", International Review of Social History, Vol.XIX, Pt. 2 (1974), pp. 213f.

⁴ Asa Briggs, "The Local Background of Chartism", in Briggs (ed.) Chartist Studies (1959), p. 13. See also J.L. & Barbara Hammond, The Age of the Chartists, 1832-1854 (1930), p. 269.

⁵ Hovell, op.cit., p. 118. See also Duncan Bythell, The Handloom Weavers (1969), Ch. 9; Julius West, A History of the Chartist Movement (1920), pp. 186ff.

This is a truncated view of northern working-class radical history, which derives from the Place Collection. A painstaking examination of the local sources shows that, in many northern towns, the ideas embodied in the Chartist programme had taken root before either the Charter or the Birmingham Petition were drawn up, and that the participation in Chartism of many ordinary semi-skilled and unskilled working men transcended riotous assembly and conspiracy. They created and sustained their own local Chartist institutions and organs, through which media they dilated upon the issues at stake, mobilised opinion and helped to give shape to the overall national movement.⁶ Although one would not like to discount the roles played by economic distress and the popular demagogues, these factors have been emphasized out of all proportion to their real relevance to Chartism.

Barnsley Chartism took place within the broad national context, but it was seasoned, and often shaped, by the peculiarities of both the regional and the local (Barnsley) situations. The factors which dictated the timing, tone and fate of the overall national movement were varied, but the Reform Act of 1832 seems to have been of special significance. The Act was increasingly viewed by the working class as having inaugurated the political ascendancy of the middle-class which, in alliance with the aristocracy, used its new power to legislate against working-class interests. The New Poor Law, for example, was seen in this light. The economic depressions, which began late in 1836, accentuated the bitterness of feeling among the labouring masses. Against this background of class hostility, ideas flourished which led to the emergence of a national political organization whose main features were the Charter, the Birmingham Petition and, later, the National Conventions. Leaders of national prestige, associated with this organization, helped, especially in the beginning, to mobilize support for a unified movement. In the later stages, however, the Chartist rank-and-file tended

⁶ A number of local studies in Briggs, op.cit., are an important contribution to this interpretation.

to take sides in the squabbles among the national leadership. The national Chartist press, especially the Northern Star, was an important organ of the overall movement, for it served as a medium of communication and education. Through the press, local Chartist activities were reported, ideas were exchanged and the Chartist ideology, for all its imprecision, was fostered. To the authorities, the emergence of such a powerful movement posed a threat to the existing order. They were determined to suppress it. The contribution of Government repression to the failure of Chartism was considerable. In as much as Barnsley Chartism occurred in this wider context, it was part of the national movement.

There was a regional dimension of Chartist activity in the industrial districts of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, of which Barnsley was a part. The region not only had in common the economic misery engendered by industrial depressions but shared a long tradition (in many towns) of political radicalism; they exchanged populations through the migrations dictated, mainly, by the vicissitudes of urbanization and industrial growth; and, because of the close proximity of the different towns, enjoyed constant inter-communal contacts through lecture tours, Chartist missionary activity, delegate meetings, monster demonstrations and camp meetings. Thus Chartist leaders from the different localities in the region got to know one another personally, engaged in a political discourse and sometimes planned joint action.

At local level four major forces came into play, giving the movement in Barnsley unique characteristics. These forces were: the local class structure, the ailment of the linen industry, the long radical tradition and the presence of Irish immigrants. By the Chartist period, class relationships in Barnsley had been sharply defined, so that there were two major classes, almost constantly at war with one another. On the one hand, was a

'proletarianized' working-class, dominated by the hand-loom weavers, living mainly in segregated and neglected areas of the town, and excluded, both by law and custom, from the exercise of power within the parochial institutions. On the other, was a resident, especially linen manufacturing, bourgeoisie which not only held the economic power but dominated the parochial institutions, administered more to their own advantage than to that of the lower orders.⁷ The low wages and the periodic slumps, characteristic of the linen trade, tended to aggravate the ill-feeling between the classes and to accentuate the general discontent among the workers in the industry. Nevertheless, nothing would be further from the truth than a suggestion that the Barnsley linen weavers travelled to Chartism "along a road of despair,"⁸ for there was in the town a long radical tradition which was repressed but not killed in 1820.⁹ By the end of the decade it had begun to reassert itself. During the Chartist period, some of the elements of the post-Napoleonic war radicalism were very much in evidence. The presence of Irish immigrants, the overwhelming majority of whom worked as linen weavers, added a flavour to Barnsley Chartism. The Chartist activities of the Irish were intertwined with the affairs of Ireland; The involvement of the Barnsley Irish immigrants in Chartism and other forms of working-class protest helped to foster solidarity between the major ethnic communities in labouring Barnsley - the English and the Irish. The strong support which O'Connor enjoyed locally was partly due to the presence of the Irish and partly to the existence of a strong sense of class solidarity, which his career (in the eyes of the Barnsley Chartists) represented.

Similarities between Chartism and the earlier radicalism of the post-war period are striking. Both movements were beset with the dilemma of choice between constitutionalism and revolution. The role of the 'gentleman demagogue' was crucial for both. Also, the two movements relied on

⁷ See Chapters One, Four and Five.

⁸ Briggs, op.cit., p. 8.

⁹ See Chapter Eight above.

the industrial working class (factory and outworkers) for their mass support. Like their predecessors, the Chartists sought first the political kingdom in the hope that the rest would be added unto them. Yet there were important differences. The Chartists were more confident. Open demonstrations and petitions, rather than conspiracy, were the general characteristics, even in the face of repression. Authority was openly defied; the Chartist prisoners were morally and materially supported. As a general rule, the collection hat gained ascendancy over pikes and guns. Most important of all, the concept of 'the industrious classes' had practically broken down. Within the framework of Chartist analysis, the middle class was now on the list of the enemies of the 'working classes'.

In this chapter we shall seek to do three things. First, to trace the development of the events which prefaced the Chartist movement. The events took place in what may be termed the 'diffuse phase' of working-class protest, during which many working-class grievances were expressed in various forms. The Chartist programme constituted a confluence where the different working-class causes were channelled into a single stream. Secondly, the chapter will deal, in considerable detail, with the local Chartist activity in the heyday of the movement. We hope to lay bare the interwoven strands of Barnsley Chartism. In this respect, we shall examine the economics of Chartism, the body of ideas that directed the movement, the role of the leadership, and the course of Chartist action. On the latter point, it will be shown that the dichotomy between 'moral' and 'physical force' Chartism is a gross oversimplification, and that the two overlapped in certain cases. Lastly, the disintegration of the Chartist movement, which can be said to have begun from 1842, will be analysed. There was not, as is sometimes glibly suggested, such a thing as a single path followed by the Chartists towards mid-Victorian liberalism. There were many paths and

many destinations, and some Chartists trod more than one path at one and the same time.

II. The Rising Tide, 1829-1838:

In the eight years or so preceding the Chartist movement working-class battles in Barnsley were fought on many fronts: many went on side by side, but some succeeded each other. The most noteworthy activities included: Owenite co-operative ventures, trade unionism, the 'war of the unstamped', the anti-Poor Law movement, the struggle for representative institutions in local affairs, and political radicalism. Owing to the diversity of such pre-Chartist movements, some commentators have viewed Chartism as "an umbrella" under which "varied groups" of aggrieved working men took shelter.¹⁰ Whereas one would not like to present Chartism as a monolithic movement, one is anxious to correct the misconception that it was amorphous, that it was an 'all things to all men' movement. As has been correctly pointed out, the pre-Chartist working-class causes were, in spite of their diversity, not so much "rivals competing for support" as "different expressions of a general discontent" rife among a sizeable portion of British society.¹¹ The diversity of the response to this discontent was dictated, in the main, by the exigencies of the times and by the resources of protest (organizational, ideological and so forth) on hand. It was a formative period during which, in its quest for a fairer

¹⁰Ward, op.cit., pp. 11f.

¹¹ J.F.C. Harrison, "Chartism in Leeds" in Briggs, op.cit., p. 63.

society, the British working class, like meandering streams, stumbled across numerous obstacles, braving some of them and evading others, and finally found itself at a point where its many-sided discontent found a common expression. But this common expression, the programme for radical parliamentary reform, was not superstitiously viewed as "a kind of charm or fetish through which every evil would be exorcised."¹² Rather, in the mainstream of the movement, the programme was shaped by historical experience and informed by an intelligent, though not always systematic, analysis of the realities of political power.

On June 1st 1829, right in the midst of a serious economic slump, a group of Barnsley working men founded a Co-operative society, "fully convinced of the necessity of such an institution, and looking upon it as ... the grand desideratum in behalf (sic) of the labouring classes."¹³ In the following August the society opened a shop for the sale of meal flour and groceries. By October the membership numbered 73.¹⁴ It was reported in December that shopkeepers in Barnsley and its surroundings found the Co-operative societies in the district rather obnoxious, for customers were abandoning them (the shopkeepers) "in a disreputable manner".¹⁵ By 1832, though the Society's membership had dropped to 31, it was, apart from running a shop, manufacturing linen goods "of every description," thus providing employment for some of its members.¹⁶ A second society, the

¹² Hovell, op.cit., p. 210.

¹³ The Weekly Free Press, Oct. 24, 1829.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The Sheffield Iris, Dec. 22, 1829, p.3.

¹⁶ The Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator date unidentified, year 1832.

Barnsley West-end Co-operative Society was founded on March 21st 1832.¹⁷

The two societies seem to have worked in co-operation rather than competition. There were also active co-operative societies in such neighbouring villages as Ardsley and Silkstone.¹⁸

It is difficult to state to what extent these co-operative ventures were 'Owenite'. A correspondent to the Leeds Times claimed in 1833 that the Co-operative societies of Yorkshire were "not based on the principles of Mr. R. Owen, but on Christian principles - justice, temperance, industry, economy, benevolence, peace, union of exertion and enjoyment."¹⁹ But, as we have been reminded, Owenism came to be a movement capable of accommodating different traditions.²⁰ In their urban environment, the Barnsley co-operators did not create model co-operative communities, but the 'co-operative principle' inspired them to form an institution appropriate to their situation. The traditional artisan's desire to present an image of sobriety added flavour to the co-operative experience. In its report to the Co-operative Congress of April 1832 the Barnsley West-end Co-operative Society stated: "We have not a drunkard, a profane or even a disorderly man amongst us, and herein lies our chief strength."²¹

The major strands of the Owenite paraphernalia were present in Barnsley in the early 1830's. As part of the North-West District of the Co-operative Societies, Barnsley participated in the lectures delivered by Owenite missionaries.²² In September 1833 Mr. William Pare, who lectured in Barnsley on the subject of Labour Exchanges, was impressed to see "a very crowded, though exceedingly attentive auditory."²³ Plans were discussed

¹⁷ The Crisis, April 28, 1832, p. 20. See also T.D. Cook, Co-operative Who's Who, A Directory of Co-operative Societies (Mexborough, 1932), p.9.

¹⁸ See the different columns of The Crisis and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator.

¹⁹ The Leeds Times, July 20, 1833, p. 3.

²⁰ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, 1968 ed.), pp. 858 & 868.

²¹ The Crisis, Ap. 28, 1832, p. 20.

²² The Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator, July 1832, p. 14.

²³ The Crisis, Oct. 5, 1833, p. 39.

to set up a branch Labour Exchange in the town, though they never materialized.²⁴ Nevertheless, linen goods produced by Barnsley co-operators found their way into the Labour Exchanges of London and Birmingham.²⁵ The Barnsley First Society, based in Wilson's Piece, had a library for the use of the members. In April 1834 the Barnsley West-end Society hosted the last Owenite Co-operative Congress said to have been attended by about 3,000 delegates. One important result of the Congress was a petition to the King on behalf of the Dorchester labourers sentenced to transportation.²⁶ From this moment co-operation in Barnsley fades into obscurity, though in the local Directory of 1837 a "Co-operative Society Store" in Wilson's Piece was listed.²⁷ On the basis of the evidence, it would appear that only a tiny minority of townsmen were involved in the Owenite Co-operative ventures. Nevertheless, to the participants, and maybe to some of those around them, it was a formative experience.

It is not known to what extent labouring Barnsley participated in the general unionism of the early 1830's. It is reported, however, that numerous trades union lodges in the town and its environs operated in close collaboration with the Owenite co-operative movement.²⁸ There is evidence that in 1832-33 unions were established in Barnsley among the journeymen boot and shoe-makers, tailors, stone masons, joiners and carpenters, and linen weavers.²⁹

²⁴ The Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator, date unidentified, 1832.

²⁵ Thompson, op.cit., p. 870.

²⁶ The Leeds Mercury, April 5, 1834, p. 5. See also Cook, loc.cit.

²⁷ William White, History, Gazetter and Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, (Sheffield, 1837), p. 320.

²⁸ The Crisis, Oct. 5, 1833, p. 39.

²⁹ The British Library, Place Coll. Set.51, F.209.

In Barnsley the battle against the newspaper stamp was fought in earnest. Unstamped newspapers were read widely, victims of prosecution were given enthusiastic support, and the campaign for the abolition of the stamp duty was pursued with vigour. It is said that unstamped papers were first introduced into Barnsley by Arthur Collins, a veteran of the radicalism of 1816-1820.³⁰ A young radical, Joseph Crabtree, acted as an agent for Joshua Hobson's Voice of the West Riding.³¹ Soon, however, probably around mid-1833, Joseph Lingard, a radical newsagent, became the main distributor of unstamped papers. In open defiance of the law, Lingard had the audacity to display the contraband papers in his window and to open a reading room where working men flocked, after their daily toils, to read the unstamped and hold political discussions. Although Lingard was "informed against", the local distributor of stamps refused "to soil his hands with the Government's dirty work" and so Lingard escaped prosecution.³² Among the unstamped papers read in Barnsley were the Poor Man's Guardian, the Twopenny Despatch, the Penny Satirist and Cleave's Gazette. These papers, reminisced John Burland, "were to me mother's milk."³³ Such champions of the unstamped as Henry Hetherington and Bronterre O'Brien addressed numerous meetings in Barnsley. On one occasion, before one such meeting commenced, Joseph Lingard stood reading by a gas-light, which aroused the curiosity of one of those present:

"What have you got there, Lingard?" inquired a man in the side boxes.

"The Penny Satirist," he replied.

³⁰ Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary" (MSS & cuttings, B.R.L.), p. 45.

³¹ The Voice of the West Riding, early issues.

³² Wilkinson, loc.cit.; John H. Burland, "Miscellaneous Writings" (MS, B.R.L.), pp. 442f; The Voice of the West Riding, Feb. 22, 1834, p. 299.

³³ Burland, op.cit., p. 442.

"What is the picture?" he asked.
"The Duke of Wellington sticking his bayonet
into a man," said Lingard.
"What's he doing that for?" he asked.
"Because he is poor," was Lingard's final
reply. 34

The extent to which the unstamped papers, many of which advocated working men's rights, enhanced the social and political consciousness of their readers was understandably remarkable. A Barnsley weaver Chartist, John Ward, who had read the Poor Man's Guardian from its very first number, later acknowledged that he owed to its editor, Bronterre O'Brien, "whatever knowledge I may possess in politics."³⁵

The martyred heroes of the unstamped received unqualified support from the Barnsley radicals. After his release from Wakefield prison, Joshua Hobson, the editor of the Voice toured many towns of the West Riding, rallying support for the battle of the unstamped. On February 19th 1834 he addressed in the Barnsley theatre "an overflowing and satisfied audience," He reported with satisfaction: "This was one of the most spirited meetings we ever had the honour of attending, and the Barnsley lads are entitled to our most special thanks."³⁶ And P.T. Brady of Sheffield, who had been imprisoned for selling unstamped newspapers, received a hero's welcome when he made a stop-over in Barnsley on his way from Wakefield prison. The evening when he arrived was dark and foggy and many in the crowd which went to meet him at Old Mill held paper lanterns. Headed by a band of music, and singing "several political songs," Brady's supporters marched with him

³⁴ Ibid., p. 443.

³⁵ Cited in Patricia Hollis, The Pauper Press (1970), p. 293. For the views of the unstamped press see Hollis, Idem, chs. VI, VII & VIII. Joel H. Wiener, The War of the Unstamped (1969), Ch. VIII.

³⁶ The Voice of the West Riding, Feb. 22, 1834, p. 299.

in a procession to Shambles Street where he spent the night. The Bull's Head Inn was too small for everyone to enter, and so Brady addressed the large crowd on Shambles Street from the inn's upper window. Among this crowd was the wife of Joseph Lingard who carried an armful of unstamped papers, openly crying her wares.³⁷ In 1835 the Barnsley journeymen shoemakers decided to demonstrate their support for the cause by reporting the proceedings of their union meetings only through the unstamped press.³⁸

The Barnsley campaign for the abolition of the stamp duty was vigorous. On May 18th 1835 "several hundred" townsmen assembled in front of Lingard's house to discuss the issue. Taxes on knowledge, resolved the meeting, barred the working man from the acquisition of that knowledge which made him a better citizen.³⁹ On April 4th 1836 a public meeting adopted a petition to Parliament for the abolition of the newspaper stamp. Some of the personalities who later figured prominently in the Chartist movement addressed the meeting: Peter Hoey (chairman), John Vallance, Joseph Lingard, Joseph Crabtree, Peter Dwyer and William Preston.⁴⁰ The struggle for a free press was only a part of the wide-ranging radical campaign which was gathering momentum at this time. There were struggles against the local Improvement Commission,⁴¹ the New Poor Law,⁴² and the established Church. But the cardinal issue of the radical campaign was political reform.

³⁷ Burland, op.cit., "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., p. 442; Wilkinson, op.cit., p. 45.

³⁸ British Library, Place Coll., Set 51, F.209.

³⁹ The Leeds Times, May 23, 1835, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Ap. 9, 1836, p. 3.

⁴¹ See Chapter Five, Section II above.

⁴² See Chapter Four above, pp. 225-228.

That working-class political radicalism in Barnsley was present as an incipient force, even during the 'tranquil twenties', is lent credibility by the fact that the issue of Parliamentary reform was revived in 1829 by none other than Richard Jackson, a veteran of the 1816-20 radical activity who, in that period, had addressed public meetings and taken part in the reading clubs and the military conspiracies.⁴³ Jackson, a hand-loom weaver, was a leading figure in the 1829 weavers' strike.⁴⁴ He told one of the public meetings during the strike:

I am well aware that if we gain
our object it will not restore us
to freedom, happiness and comfort.
Even the list of prices is a famine
price, and if we work at the list price
we are obliged to rise up early in the
morning and work late at night,
and yet be clothed with rags
and pined with hunger. We must look
for Parliamentary Reform, and petition for
a redress of the grievances under which
we suffer, for a reduction of the standing
army, which is kept up in the time of
peace six times greater than at any
former period, costing more than seven
million a year, and this is to give
us bullets when we cry for bread.
... The system of maladministration and
bad government is grinding the poor man
down to the lowest pitch, and causing
him to end his days in the workhouse.
But this system, thank God, is drawing to
a close. 45

Jackson's speech is reminiscent of the rhetoric against Old Corruption in the post-Napoleonic War period. The champions of this rhetoric still commanded working-class loyalty by the 1830's. On January 27th 1830,

⁴³ See Chapter Eight above, p. 414 & P.R.O., T.S.11/979: Depositions of John Mitchell.

⁴⁴ See Chapter Six, Section IV above.

⁴⁵ The Leeds Mercury, Sept. 12, 1829, p. 3. My own emphasis.

for example, a rumour quickly spread through the town that William Cobbett was in a coach that had stopped briefly at the White Bear Inn to exchange horses. It happened to be true; Cobbett was on his way to Sheffield to address a meeting. A large crowd soon surrounded the coach "to obtain a peep for their gratification." Many conversed and shook hands with the veteran radical "as if glad to see an old friend."⁴⁶ In 1832, when Cobbett delivered a public address in Barnsley "on the extensive and lamentable distress which prevailed throughout the country," he drew a sizeable working-class crowd.⁴⁷

It was such people as Cobbett and Hunt or even Hetherington and O'Brien rather than Edward Baines who enjoyed almost unqualified radical working-class support in the early 1830's. Although, in the heat of the period, many labouring men and women took part in the Whig dominated Reform Bill agitation, the evidence from Barnsley suggests that the agitation was not really a working-class 'show'. The working-class radicals, though present in the campaign, had no platform. They maintained anonymity in this turbulent period. What was perhaps the largest Reform Bill agitation meeting held in the town on March 15th 1831, to petition Parliament for the enactment of the Bill, was not addressed by a single working-class man. The meeting, chaired by George Harrison, a master printer and book seller, was addressed by two linen manufacturers, three shopkeepers, two coal masters, and a solicitor.⁴⁸ The tenuous links between the middle and working classes quickly dissolved in the wake of the 1832 Act as the

⁴⁶ The Sheffield Iris, Feb. 2, 1830, p.3.

⁴⁷ John H. Burland, "Annals of Barnsley" (MS., 4 Vols., Barnsley Reference Library, hereafter B.R.L.), Vol.II, p. 10.

⁴⁸ The Leeds Mercury, Mar. 19, 1831, p. 3. It was Harrison's press that the local magistrates later used to print anti-Chartist bills.

Reformed Parliament manifested a hostile attitude towards labour.

The political frustrations of the working class erupted into riots during the general and by-elections of 1835. The rioting can be seen as the response of a class which, in a period of important political activity, had no recourse to political sanction in the shape of a franchise. In the January general election, riots occurred in places like Sheffield and Halifax.⁴⁹ The West Riding by-election of May saw even worse rioting. Troops were stationed at Leeds, Halifax and Wakefield.⁵⁰ On April 27th, during the campaign, J. Stuart Wortley, the Tory candidate, had a rough reception from the Barnsley crowd. He was booed and jeered, and the Tory banners were torn. Two radical leaders, Joseph Crabtree and Joseph Stocks, tried in vain to get Mr. Wortley a hearing from the crowd. On election day 400 special constables were enrolled. Crowds thronged the streets but there were no incidents.⁵¹ Mr. Wortley, who was also a magistrate, lost the election, but it is difficult to tell whether the riots had an impact on the result.

After the by-election, the Barnsley working-class radicals, like those in other industrial districts, increasingly channelled their discontent into organized political agitation. In May, apart from petitioning against

⁴⁹ P.R.O., H.O. 40/33.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., p. 34; The Leeds Mercury, May 2, 1835, p. 5; The Leeds Times, May 2, 1835, p.3; Sheepscar Library, Leeds: Harewood MSS., Lieutenancy Papers, Box 2 (appointment of special constables, May 9th 1835).

'taxes on knowledge', the radicals also petitioned Parliament for the liberation of the Dorchester labourers. The Barnsley petition bore some 2,000 signatures.⁵² Towards the end of the year there was already an informal radical organization in the town. On November 6th the Barnsley radicals held two grand dinners, one in Barnsley and the other in Worsborough Common. The dinners were held to celebrate the birthday of the radical orator, Henry Hunt, who had died earlier in the year. The chairman of the gathering in Worsborough Common was none other than Arthur Collins whose eldest son, later, like his father, a Chartist, was called Henry Hunt Collins. The party adopted an address to Messrs. Thomas and Henry Hunt which expressed admiration for their late father's "character and principles". Also, Arthur Collins proposed, and Joseph Lingard seconded, a toast: "to the immortal memory of William Cobbett, deceased and his two last productions, the Legacy to Labourers and the Legacy to Parsons." Toasts were also drunk to Major Cartwright and "General Jackson and Republicanism all over the world." Five days later the Barnsley 'Radical wives' held their own tea party also to celebrate Hunt's birthday.⁵³

During Feargus O'Connor's tour of the north to promote the 'Great Radical Association' based in East London,⁵⁴ the Barnsley radicals sent him an invitation to visit the town. When O'Connor arrived from Huddersfield on December 18th 1835, he got a tremendously enthusiastic reception. A dinner was held in his honour at the 'Shakespeare Inn'. The radicals presented O'Connor with an address which was read by Joseph Crabtree. The opening words of the address left no doubt whatsoever

⁵² The Leeds Times, May 23 & June 6, 1836, pp. 3.

⁵³ The Leeds Times, Nov. 14, 1835, p. 3.

⁵⁴ See Ward, op.cit., p. 77.

that O'Connor was being adopted as the popular leader of working-class radicalism, and that he was being asked to step into Henry Hunt's empty shoes:

We have for a number of years
been struggling amidst opposition
and calumny of the worst and
meanest description, to emancipate
ourselves from a state of political
thralldom almost unparalleled in the
annals of English history, and
with the exception of Henry Hunt,
Esq. we may say that we have
been destitute of a permanent
friend. He, during his life time, did
all that was in the power of man
to do, to procure for every individual,
that which nature allots to every
man in the human family, at his birth.
His decease made us despair, but
finding you, benevolent heir, come
forward so manfully in the cause
of suffering multitudes, we have thought
proper, in these eventful times, to
ask you to support and lead us on until
we arrive at a state of perfect
political freedom.

The Barnsley radicals, stated the address, looked upon O'Connor as "the star in the firmament of Radicalism" who would "guide the people to perfect liberty and happiness." They embraced the "creed and credentials" of the 'Great Radical Association' of London. Universal suffrage, annual elections, vote by ballot and no property qualifications for the representatives of the people were the principles which they had "long contended for."

In reply, O'Connor agreed to undertake the task of rendering his leadership to the people until they obtained their rights. The people, he said, were his only source of power; with their support, he would triumph, but without their co-operation, all effort would come to naught. Toasts were drunk to: O'Connor; the 'Great Radical Association'; the "immortal memory of Henry Hunt"; "the success and prosperity of the glorious Unstamped Press"; and "universal suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by ballot and no property qualification for representatives in Parliament."

Later in the evening O'Connor addressed a public meeting in the Theatre. His speech, which lasted about two hours, made a scathing attack on the Tories and the Whigs. He castigated the Reformed Parliament for what he described as its iniquitous legislation aimed at oppressing the poor. O'Connor urged the Barnsley men and women to form a branch Radical Association. On the following morning he delivered another public address in the market place. His main subjects were the state of Ireland and the local abuses perpetrated by the Barnsley Improvement Commissioners. When he left for Sheffield, he was escorted to his coach by a large cheering crowd. Some Barnsley inhabitants walked all the way to Sheffield; for they were "determined to see and hear as much as possible of one in whose success they felt the deepest interest, in whose presence their hearts throbbed with more than esteem."⁵⁵ From this time the radical movement gathered momentum. These events, occurring as they did before either the Charter or the Petition came into being, would give the lie to the claim that northern Chartism owes its origin to the London Working Men's Association and the Birmingham Political Union.

After O'Connor's departure the Barnsley Radical Association was immediately formed. Early in 1836, before the London Working Men's Association was founded, a campaign was launched to organise branches in the surrounding townships and villages. The Radical Association held weekly meetings at the home of the Irishman, Peter Hoey. Various topics were discussed, including parliamentary reform, the newspaper stamp, the relationship between Church and State and the New Poor Law.⁵⁶ When

⁵⁵ The True Sun, Dec. 26, 1835, p. 1; The Leeds Times, Dec. 26, 1835, p. 4.

⁵⁶ The Leeds Times, Feb. 6, Feb. 20, Feb. 27, Mar. 5, Mar. 19, Ap. 2, Ap. 9, June 4, 1836.

O'Connor returned to Barnsley on August 22nd 1836, the Barnsley people showed even greater enthusiasm for the radical cause. O'Connor was met, two miles out of town, by 300 persons and a band of music. They escorted him to the town centre where he was met by hundreds more people. The radicals presented O'Connor with a damask table cloth, patterned with rose, shamrock and thistle which surrounded the words: "To Feargus O'Connor, Fort Robert, County of Cork, Ireland, Missionary of the Grand Radical Association of London from his humble admirers, the Radical Reformers of Barnsley." O'Connor's speech on that occasion was said to have made many more converts to radicalism.⁵⁷

Because of the increased membership of the Radical Association, the latter transferred the venue of their meetings from Hoey's house to Joseph Crabtree's more commodious 'Freeman's Inn'. Apparently, Crabtree had opened the public house specifically to accommodate radical meetings. There was, within the inn, a large reading room where radical journals were available. Crabtree had great difficulty in obtaining a licence to operate the Freeman's Inn and, in fact, he was fined £8 in December 1836 for allowing meetings to take place in it.⁵⁸

In December 1836 the Radical Association organized a public meeting to memorialize the King for the release of William Ashton and Frank Mirfield who had been transported for their part in the 1829 weavers' strike. Money was raised to enable Ashton's mother to travel to London to raise the case of her son with the Home Secretary.⁵⁹ In January 1837 the idea

⁵⁷ Ibid., Aug. 27, 1836. The decision to weave the table cloth had been made immediately after O'Connor's first visit; see The True Sun, Dec. 26, 1835.

⁵⁸ The Leeds Times, Sept. 17 & Dec. 24, 1836. Unfortunately, there is no indication of the size of the Association membership.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Dec. 3, 1836, p. 5; The Leeds Mercury, Dec. 3, 1836, p. 8.

of starting a radical newspaper, which William Hill had discussed with a number of Barnsley radicals, was raised at a Barnsley public meeting in the presence of Feargus O'Connor. Tentative plans had been made to set up a printing press in Crabtree's Freeman's Inn. As is well known, O'Connor later published this radical paper, the Northern Star, from Leeds.⁶⁰

During 1837 the highlights of the radical campaign comprised: the anti-Poor Law movement, the battle against the local Improvement Commission, the quest for political reform, the rival campaigns in Barnsley of the London Working Men's Association and the Central National Association, the local support for the Glasgow cotton spinners and the celebration of Hunt's birthday. Most of these activities attracted townsmen and women some of whom were not even members of the Radical Association.⁶¹ During the Autumn and early Summer of 1837 the rival London Working Men's Association and the 'Bernadite' Central National Association campaigned for the support of the Barnsley radicals. The latter organization, mainly, it would appear, because of its association with O'Connor, triumphed over its rival. The meeting of the Barnsley Radical Association held on June 19th passed Arthur Collins' motion reaffirming the Barnsley radicals' support for the Central National Association.⁶²

The Barnsley Radical Association also took active steps to agitate for parliamentary reform. On February 20th the Association adopted a petition to parliament asking for universal suffrage, vote by ballot, annual parliaments and no property qualifications. No body of men, asserted

⁶⁰ The Leeds Times, Jan. 21, 1837, p. 5; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 71. Donald Read, Press and People, 1790-1850 (1961), p.98.

⁶¹ For the anti-Poor Law movement see Chapter Four above, pp. 225ff; for the struggle against the Improvement Commission see Chapter Five, Section II, above.

⁶² The Leeds Times, June 24, 1837, p. 5; See also Hovell, op.cit., p.66.

the petition, had any right to legislate for the people without their consent. The petition was sent to J.A. Roebuck for presentation to Parliament.⁶³ During the 1837 general election campaign the leaders of the Radical Association were anxious that the visits of the candidates to the town would not be marred by riots as had been the case at Huddersfield. On July 24th they called a public meeting on Market Hill to entreat their followers not to commit any acts of violence when the candidates came. The meeting agreed that the candidates would be given a hearing provided they answered certain questions without evasion. Peter Hoey was unanimously selected to put the questions to the candidates. The five questions constituted a summary of the radical programme: 1) Whether if elected to Parliament the candidates would vote for universal suffrage with the protection of the ballot. 2) Whether they would vote for the repeal of the Septennial Act and for no property qualification for M.P.s. 3) Whether they would vote for the repeal of the Corn Laws. 4) Whether they would support the repeal of the "infamous" Poor Law Amendment Act, and 5) Whether they would vote for the revision of the pension list, the reform of the "corrupt" Irish corporations, the abolition of the tithes and the separation of Church and State. Although the carriage of J.S. Wortley, one of the candidates, was pelted with stones, Peter Hoey soon prevailed on the crowd to keep order. The candidates' answers to the radicals' questions left no doubt whatsoever that the West Riding candidates were opposed to reform. The need for a vigorous extra-parliamentary campaign was made more obvious.⁶⁴

⁶³ The Leeds Times, Mar. 4, 1837, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Ibid. July 29, 1837, p. 4.

The Barnsley radicals were among the strongest supporters of the Glasgow cotton spinners accused of murdering a blackleg.⁶⁵ On September 25th the Radical Association called a meeting of the "labouring classes" to organize the defence of the spinners. The meeting resolved to do all it could to assist the men, and within two weeks more than £8 had been collected in Barnsley. When the spinners were later sentenced to transportation, the Barnsley radicals reacted very bitterly.⁶⁶

The 1837 celebration of Henry Hunt's birthday on November 6th was a unique occasion. Feargus O'Connor (looked upon in Barnsley as Hunt's successor) was the guest of honour at the grand dinner at Crabtree's Freeman's Inn. He gave what was described as a moving speech. The toasts drunk to on that occasion are indicative of the different traditions that influenced the radical movement:

1. Joshua Hyde: (chairman): The people (three times);
Henry Hunt.
2. Arthur Collins: Feargus O'Connor.
3. Joseph Lingard: Robert Nicoll and the Leeds Times.
4. John Ward: Augustus Beaumont and Henry Hetherington.
5. Arthur Collins: John Bell, Bronterre O'Brien and
Arthur O'Connor.
6. -do-: Sharman Crawford
7. John Ward: Cleave, Vincent and the Working Men's
Association.
8. George Savage: George Loveless and his five
persecuted brethren.
9. Thomas Lingard: James Simpson and Universal Education.
10. -do-: Robert Owen.
11. Joseph Lingard: Daniel Whittle Harvey, John Fielden,
and General Johnson.
12. Arthur Collins: Earl Stanhope, and may he ever preserve
until the New Poor Law shall be erased
from the statute book.

⁶⁵ See Sydney & Beatrice Webb, History of Trade Unionism (1911 ed.), pp. 153-155.

⁶⁶ The Leeds Times, Sept. 30, & Oct. 14, 1837, pp. 5. Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 81.

13. David Fletcher: Richard Oastler and the Factory Bill.
14. Joseph Crabtree: John Knight of Oldham.
15. David Fletcher: Robert Emmet, Esq.
16. William Preston: The late William Cobbett.
17. George Uttley: Martin van Buren and Andrew Jackson.
18. Joseph Crabtree: Joseph Crabtree and no property qualifications.
19. William Preston: William Ashton, Frank Mirfield, the two individuals transported from this town.
20. George Savage: Our persecuted brethren of Glasgow. 67

This was a wide range of heroes associated with the different causes of labour: from 'Huntite' radicalism to republicanism and socialism; from trade unionism to the struggle for a free press and popular education; from factory reform to the fight against the New Poor Law.

In the new year the Radical Association continued to hold regular meetings at which the major theme was the rights of labour. In March 1838 the Association decided to hold a large public demonstration in the following month. Invitations were sent to such personalities as O'Connor, J.R. Stephens, Richard Oastler, John Fielden, and General Johnson. The rally, attended by "thousands" on May Day Green, took place on Easter Tuesday, April 17th. Joseph Crabtree was unanimously called upon to chair the proceedings. In a long address, he told the rally that the working class would always remain a class of oppressed slaves, unless they secured the right to elect their own representatives to Parliament who would pass laws consonant with the wishes of the common people. The present Parliament, he said, consisted of men who were only interested in "raising themselves at the expense of honesty, labour and industry." But as the people, by their own exertions, had secured the release of the Dorchester labourers, so would they,

⁶⁷ The Leeds Times, Nov. 11, 1837, p.5.

with the same indomitable spirit, secure their own freedom. Moving the draft petition to the House of Commons, Peter Hoey said that his own definition of representation was that "the people who were the producers of all the wealth of the nation ought to be represented in the House of Commons." The gathering unanimously adopted a petition to the House of Commons demanding "those political rights which contribute to their political advancement and their social happiness." The day ended with a 'radical dinner' at the Odd Fellows hall where Feargus O'Connor was the main speaker.⁶⁸ The rising tide of working-class protest was now becoming a force for the establishment to reckon with.

III. The Popular Phase:

One of the delegations from the Birmingham Political Union, which in the Spring and Summer of 1838 toured Scotland and northern England to promote the Union's Petition,⁶⁹ addressed a large public meeting in Barnsley on June 11th. The Birmingham Petition received strong support from such local radicals as Crabtree and Collins in their speeches. The meeting

⁶⁸ Ibid., April 21, 1838, p.5; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 83f. Similar meetings took place in other West Riding towns, for example Sheffield and Dewsbury. There is a rather romantic report of the Barnsley meeting in the Marx Memorial Library Quarterly Bulletin, No.70 (1974), pp. 13f. The article misleadingly states, for example, that the rally was held on "May Day", i.e. May 1st.

⁶⁹ See Hovell, op.cit., pp. 105f; Alex Wilson, "Chartism in Glasgow," in Briggs, op.cit., pp. 251f. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894 ed.), p. 19.

adopted the Petition, giving it unqualified support, and resolved to form a local association on the Birmingham model. A twenty-four man committee was elected to collect signatures for the Petition.⁷⁰ The Committee, which included such eminent local radicals as Vallance, Crabtree, Lingard, Uttley, Collins and Hoey, later issued a four thousand-word manifesto addressed to their "fellow workmen" of Barnsley and the neighbourhood. The central theme of the manifesto was that unless the labouring men gained the right to elect their political representatives, their social and economic condition would continue to deteriorate, for the law makers, under the existing system, were there principally to oppress and exploit the poor:

Our present law-makers... watch
over your powers of production with
an eagle's eye, and if they
observe you can possibly earn one
penny more than will barely keep
you alive, they never cease
scheming till they have gotten
it from you.

Only when "a great Charter", or "the right to vote for Members of Parliament", was obtained, would the working man "enjoy the fruits of his industry and become a respectable member of Society." A mass support of this great movement was essential for an eventual victory. If the men and women of Barnsley had "no love for themselves," urged the manifesto, they ought, at least, to think of their children:

Can you... imagine that your children
and those of your friends and kindred are
doomed through poverty to be brought up
like the wild ass's colt, and as ignorant

⁷⁰ The Leeds Times, June 16, 1838, p. 5; The Northern Star, June 16, 1838, p. 5; Burland, op.cit., p. 86.

as the Indian's brood, and to become the dupes and slaves and victims of their oppressors, who go prowling about like a wolf after its prey to rob your daughters of their virtue and chastity? ... Oh! our feelings recoil at these ideas; they are like the assassin's dagger entering our hearts, and before we would submit to this fate, and have every principle of our nature outraged by the insatiable selfishness of a few mortal men, if we had the power, and we speak it with the greatest reverence to our God, we would raze the earth to its foundations, and scatter the huge fabric into its original chaos. 71

These were angry words and in the following four years or so it looked as if Britain's political structure would be razed to its foundations.

The radical meeting of June 18th constituted itself into a general meeting of the Barnsley Northern Union. The meeting approved the constitution of the Union, and most of those present enrolled as members. The Barnsley Northern Union linked itself to the Great Northern Union, inaugurated at Leeds earlier in the month.⁷² The Barnsley meeting coincided with Coronation Day and, according to the Barnsley Northern Star correspondent, the Chartist meeting gravely undermined the celebrations of the royal occasion, for the predominant majority of the townsmen opted for the Chartist meeting. The correspondent claimed that Thomas Taylor, a linen manufacturer in charge of the Coronation Day proceedings, "gave the signal expecting the very earth to tremble with the sound," but, "alas, we heard not a whisper except his own voice, which died away in hoarse thundering of 'hiss, hiss, hiss'."⁷³

⁷¹ "The Chartist Movement in Barnsley, Fifty Years Ago: Interesting Manifesto" (reprint from the Barnsley Chronicle June 29, 1889: Bretton Bequest, B.R.L.). The document will hereafter be referred to as "Chartist Manifesto."

⁷² The Leeds Times, June 16, 1838, p. 5; The Northern Star, June 23, 1838, p. 5; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 86. For the Great Northern Union see Harrison in Briggs, op.cit., p. 75.

⁷³ The Northern Star, July 7, 1838, p. 5.

Right from its inception the Barnsley Northern Union pursued a vigorous programme of political activity. Weekly meetings, heavily attended, were held at the homes of Peter Hoey and Joseph Crabtree. At the West Riding Chartist demonstration at Peep Green on October 15th the Barnsley contingent turned out in great strength with banners and music. Their main banner, a large green flag fringed with white, had, on one side, the inscription: "Feargus O'Connor and the Barnsley Northern Union." On the reverse side were the Six Points of the Charter. Joseph Crabtree addressed the Peep Green meeting on behalf of the Barnsley Chartists.⁷⁴

In the last days of 1838 and early in 1839 the Barnsley Chartists were busy propagating the Chartist gospel in the surrounding villages and townships, and also collecting the 'National Rent' to finance the National Convention. The Barnsley missionaries, especially Crabtree, Hoey, Vallance and Lister, helped to start branches of the Northern Union at Dodworth, Worsborough Common, Ardsley, Cawthorne and Clayton West.⁷⁵ In January 1839 the Worsborough Common Northern Union, within the first few weeks of its life, repudiated the anti-Corn Law movement. It observed that by supporting the movement, the poor were allowing themselves to be manipulated by the middle class, thus accepting the label: 'Baines's Asses'.⁷⁶

In the town and its vicinity the National Rent issue was taken seriously. When at the end of January 1839 the West Riding Chartist delegate meeting published the amount of 'rent' received, it was discovered that Barnsley ranked among the top contributors, surpassed only by Bradford and Halifax. She accounted for £26, or 13 per cent, of the £200 subscribed by 27 West Riding localities. Contributions from some of the more populous areas were disappointing. Huddersfield accounted for £7, and Leeds £3.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid. Oct. 16, 1838, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Dec. 1 & 8, 1838; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., p. 98.

⁷⁶ The Northern Star, Jan. 26, 1839, p. 3.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Feb. 2, 1839, p. 8.

The Barnsley Chartists reacted to the figures with an appeal "to the fellow sufferers of the West Riding" which was published in the Northern Star. It was no good, said the Barnsley men, for the Chartists to talk of fighting to defend the Convention, if they were not prepared to give it pecuniary support: "Your enemies will laugh you to scorn. ... They know well, if you will not subscribe your money, you will never sacrifice your lives." The word Convention, argued the Barnsley appeal, instilled terror in the hearts of the authorities, especially if it had financial backing: "Copper and silver will make excellent powder and shot, and will kill at a greater distance than pikes and swords; and if you arm the Convention with the pecuniary weapons, your enemies will fear and tremble." For their part, the Barnsley Chartists had "done their noble duty" and would continue to do more:

Come then important Leeds, is £3 all
that can be spared with all thy wealth?
Bestir yourselves. ... Where is Huddersfield?
What has that mighty town been doing?
Surely after thou hast been the
rallying point for the Radicals of England
all these years £7 is not all that can
be found within thy walls? Make
another effort or all our hopes are
blasted. 78

At home the Chartists stepped up their National Rent campaign. They divided the town and its neighbourhood into 30 'districts' and appointed two collectors for each district. The collectors called on individuals every week for the subscriptions. They approached not just labouring men but shopkeepers and master craftsmen.⁷⁹ At the same time, money was being collected in Barnsley for the defence of the Rev. J.R. Stephens. The

⁷⁸ Ibid. Feb. 16, 1839, p. 7; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley" op.cit., p. 99.

⁷⁹ The Northern Star, Mar. 2, 1839, p. 8.

'Stephens Defence Fund', which was managed by a nine-man committee, amounted to about £30 between February and May.⁸⁰

When the Barnsley Chartists heard of the resignation of the Birmingham delegates from the Convention, and when Daniel O'Connell's prediction of the Convention's failure reached them, they resolved to demonstrate to the Chartist leadership that the Convention had the backing of the Chartist rank-and-file. They invited O'Connor to attend a rally in Barnsley on April 7th. When he arrived, he was met, one mile out of town, by a crowd, estimated at over 6,000, who walked in a colourful procession to the Odd Fellows hall where a meeting, chaired by John Vallance, took place. Speeches were made by Ashton (who had returned eleven months earlier from his banishment in Botany Bay), Vallance, Hoey, Crabtree, Ward and Maudsley. The speeches emphasized the importance of the Charter, the need to support the Convention at all cost, and the determination to retaliate against those members of the trading public who refused to subscribe to the National Rent. O'Connor, the main speaker, addressed the rally for more than two hours on a range of topics: from a savage vilification of Daniel O'Connell to free trade and agriculture. The meeting passed three resolutions: the first pledging support for the Charter until it became the law of the land; the second expressing unbounded confidence in the Convention; and the third calling on all the Barnsley Chartists to exercise exclusive dealing against those local traders who were unsympathetic to the Chartist cause.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 99 & 105.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 102f.

On the next day another public meeting, chaired by Ashton, was held to discuss the conduct of the delegates who had walked out of the Convention. The meeting passed a vitriolic resolution, strongly critical of those delegates:

We, the members of the Barnsley Northern Union view with contempt, the infamous conduct of Messrs. Hadley, Salt and Douglas, in deserting the Convention and seeking to render abortive the Radical Cause; we denounce them as traitors to the cause of humanity, and enemies to reason, truth and justice. They have justly merited our disapprobation and we hereby pour our execrations on such pusillanimous characters.

The same meeting decided to reorganize the Barnsley Northern Union to make it more effective. The idea of 'sectional' meetings organized by the Barnsley Union Society in 1819-20 was resurrected. The town and its suburbs was divided into 12 'sectional districts'. Chartist activities, especially National Rent collections, 'political education', and the regular business meetings, would take place at this level. Each section would nominate two representatives who would meet once a fortnight in the 'Council Room'. This body of representatives, or 'councillors' as they were called, would be responsible for the general movement in the whole Barnsley Union. It was also decided, as a matter of policy, to cease agitating for the abolition of both the New Poor Law and the Corn Laws in order to concentrate on the pursuit of universal suffrage.⁸²

The meeting on April 14th, chaired by John Burland, learned that the Chartist women had decided to form a 'Female Union' to "unite with the men and co-operate with them to bring about their redemption from slavery."

⁸² Ibid., pp. 103f.; The Northern Star, Ap. 13, 1839, p. 5. For the walk-out of the Birmingham delegates from the Convention see Hovell, op.cit., p. 131; Trygve R. Tholfsen, "The Chartist Crisis in Birmingham," International Review of Social History, Vol.III, Pt. 3 (1958), p. 461.

At its first general meeting on April 21st the Female Union agreed on a weekly subscription of one penny per head. It was resolved: 1) to give financial backing to the struggle for the Charter and to individuals "who may be persecuted by either of the tyrant factions, Whig or Tory," and 2) to step up the campaign of exclusive dealing.⁸³

Earlier, on April 15th, the Chartists broke up an anti-Corn Law meeting in the Odd Fellows hall. A Mr. Gregg who was supposed to give an anti-Corn Law lecture was unable to do so because Ashton's motion, condemning the anti-Corn Law movement as subversive of working-class interests, was overwhelmingly approved. The meeting ended with three cheers for O'Connor, three for Stephens, three for the Convention, and three for Ashton.⁸⁴ It was now obvious that the Chartists were on a collision course with the regime.

The town's 'principal inhabitants', who had hitherto maintained uneasy silence, decided to seek government protection. In a petition to the magistrates on May 6th they requested that troops be stationed in the town. They accused the Chartists of creating apprehension by holding nocturnal meetings, drilling, procuring fire arms and "other deadly weapons", and using threatening language against "the manufacturers, the shopkeepers and other respectable inhabitants." The magistrates forwarded the petition to the Home Secretary. In a covering letter, they confirmed

⁸³ The Northern Star, Ap. 20 & Ap. 27, 1839, pp. 4.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Ap. 20, 1839, p. 4; The Leeds Mercury, Ap. 27, 1839, p. 5.

the fears of the petitioners. They alleged that the Chartists were holding tumultuous meetings, reading, in public, "violent" and "seditious" papers like the Northern Star, and intimidating the shopkeepers into subscribing to the Chartist fund. The magistrates provided the Home Secretary with a dossier on each of the four "most violent" Chartist leaders. These were: Vallance, Ashton, Crabtree and Hoey. The first two, with records of conviction for violent conduct, were dubbed 'most dangerous'.⁸⁵

When a Royal Proclamation prohibiting illegal meetings was posted in all public places, the Chartist leaders responded by calling a public meeting on May 13th. The motive for calling the meeting was psychologically to prepare the Chartists for attending the Peep Green county demonstration in defiance of the Government ban. The meeting resolved "that the people of this country have a constitutional right to meet together for the purpose of making their grievances known to the Government and the Crown." It was decided that the Barnsley Chartists would attend the Peep Green demonstration on May 21st but would not carry arms of any description "as under present circumstances it would be illegal and might perhaps injure the cause by endangering the lives of the people and destroying the peace of the nation."⁸⁶

At Peep Green, William Ashton and Peter Hoey were among those who addressed the rally. Ashton detected a complacent belief in 'moral force' among his Chartist colleagues. 'Physical force', he told the rally, might be necessary as a measure of "justice and retribution", for example if the Convention were to be suppressed by force.⁸⁷ Back in Barnsley the magistrates,

⁸⁵ P.R.O., H.O.40/51: Copy of the petition; and H.B. Cooke to Home Secretary May 8, 1839.

⁸⁶ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 106.

⁸⁷ The Northern Star, May 21, 1839, p. 1.

persuaded that "riots, tumults and other breaches of the peace" were about to happen on that day, appointed over 500 special constables, alerted the yeomanry and brought in a party of London police.⁸⁸ Later, on June 10th, the 'principal inhabitants' asked for permanent barracks to be erected in or near Barnsley.⁸⁹

Throughout the month of July the Barnsley Chartists held public meetings almost daily to discuss the major events of the movement. When Attwood's Bill embodying the principles of the Charter was presented to Parliament, they called for "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." On July 18th they met to condemn what they saw as the suppression of the Birmingham Chartists during the Bull Ring riots. They renamed May Day Green, their meeting place, 'the Bull Ring', "in unison with our friends in Birmingham." On July 22, while the Convention was debating whether to call a 'Sacred Month' or not, the Barnsley Chartists endorsed the idea of a Sacred Month and in fact appointed a five-man 'Committee of Public Safety' who would protect the public during the Sacred Month. They wanted the campaign to be as peaceful as possible. Plans were also made for the Chartists to withdraw their savings from the banks.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid., June 1, 1839, p. 5; P.R.O., H.O. 40/51: W.C. Mence to Lord Russell, May 23, 1839; Harewood MSS, Lieutenancy Papers Box 2: W.C. Mence to Lord Harewood, May 23, 1839.

⁸⁹ P.R.O., H.O.40/51: the petition signed by 92 individuals, most of whom were manufacturers and shopkeepers.

⁹⁰ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., pp. 110f.; The Northern Star, July 13, July 20, July 27, 1839.

The magistrates were greatly alarmed. They applied to the Home Secretary for troops. Over £300 had been contributed by the 'principal inhabitants' to convert old buildings on Mount Vernon (a mile out of town) into temporary barracks. The Home Office sanctioned the request and the troops moved into the temporary barracks on August 2nd. On August 1st the magistrates issued a large hand-bill warning the Chartists against attending 'illegal' public meetings "which have lately excited the alarm of the peaceable inhabitants." The hand-bill also ordered the Chartists to stop exclusive dealing, or, as it was put, obtaining money from shopkeepers "by intimidation, as by threatening them with personal danger or injury to their property, threatening to mark them down, presenting them as enemies of the people, or endeavouring to injure them with loss of business by exclusive dealing... thereby to injure them in their lawful business."⁹¹

In defiance of this warning, the Chartists called a public meeting for the afternoon of August 6th. Earlier that day the Chartist leaders changed their mind. The brisk movement of troops, cavalrymen and special constables served as a warning that the forces of law and order were ready for a showdown. The leaders advised their fellow Chartists not to attend the meeting:

Working men of Barnsley ...
It being understood that this day
... is the day appointed by the
authorities of the Town to enact the
bloody drama of Peterloo! And
sacrificing the lives and liberties
of the People to their diabolical tyranny;

⁹¹ P.R.O., H.O. 40/51: Magistrates' hand-bill dated Aug. 1; H.B. Cooke to Lord Russell, July 24; J. Thornley to General Napier July 20; H. Watkins to Lord Russell, Aug. 2; The Leeds Times, Aug. 10, 1839, p. 5.

We, the committee, desirous of frustrating their base, bloody, and brutal designs, request your co-operation by abstaining from any Public Demonstration of your moral force at the present, at least, but you will meet on Sunday morning next at St. Mary's Church to assert your RIGHTS to those places of Divine Worship, which have been built for your use. 92

The Chartists ignored this advice and assembled on May Day Green for the meeting. The leaders, having heard that warrants had been issued for their arrest, stayed away from the meeting which was chaired by a weaver named Reuben Joynes. The estimated crowd of 10,000 reaffirmed its determination to struggle for the Charter but agreed to accept the advice of "our unflinching patriot, Feargus O'Connor" to call off the Sacred Month.⁹³

The 'Church-in' on Sunday, August 11th was a unique occasion. More than 3,000 Chartists marched from Barebones in the south to St. Mary's Church in the north. The Church, which normally accommodated about a thousand people, was completely packed. Special constables, armed with cutlasses, were stationed in all the pews. The requested sermon delivered by the Rev. Robert Willan, the incumbent, was based on the 6th Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, Verse 13: "Quit you like men, be strong."⁹⁴ From the wording of the Chartist leaders' handbill, the 'Church-in' was held as an answer to the magistrates' ban on public meetings. The Chartists found the parish Church, built and maintained with public money, to be a good alternative meeting place where they would demonstrate their numerical strength or, as they put it, their 'moral force'.

⁹² P.R.O., H.O.40/51: Hand-bill signed by the Chartist committee.

⁹³ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., p. 112; The Leeds Times, Aug. 10, 1839, p. 5.

⁹⁴ The Leeds Times, Aug. 17, 1839, p. 8; The Leeds Mercury Aug. 17, 1839, p. 5.

On August 12th, which had originally been fixed by the Convention as the beginning of the Sacred Month, Chartists all over the country assembled for a symbolic 'National Holiday'. Like their colleagues elsewhere, the Barnsley Chartists defied the ban on public meetings and held one in the morning. The chairman, Peter Hoey, exhorted the gathering to keep the peace and threatened to "desert" them if they resorted to disorderly conduct. After spirited speeches, one of the important resolutions passed was an appeal to the Queen to dismiss her Ministers and replace them with those "who would make the People's Charter, and repeal of the Union between England and Ireland, Cabinet measures." The meeting decided to assemble again in the afternoon for a big procession. The procession was duly held; the crowd ended up at May Day Green for a second public meeting. The magistrates, who had employed short-hand experts to record the proceedings, now brought in the cavalry, the dragoons and the special constables. But, before they could approach the meeting, the chairman dissolved it. Nevertheless, the Riot Act was read and the troops cleared the people from the streets and the public houses. In the next five days eleven Chartists were arrested and sent to York Castle for trial at the next assizes. But the Barnsley Chartists were not silenced. The constable who came to arrest John Vallance was pelted with stones. When the chaise carrying the Sheffield Chartist prisoners went through Barnsley, a crowd tried to stop it in order to rescue the prisoners. They were dispersed by troops.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Ibid.; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 112ff.; The Northern Star, Aug. 17 & Aug. 24, 1839, pp. 4; Thomas Frost, "The Life and Times of John Vallance," in Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary" (MSS & cuttings, B.R.L.), pp. 244ff.; P.R.O., H.O.40/51 H.B. Cooke to Home Secretary, Aug. 13; Cooke to Lord Harewood, Aug. 17, 1839.

In spite of their leaders' absence in prison, the Chartists continued to meet regularly. They collected enough money to secure bail for their colleagues early in September. Harrassed by the authorities, whenever they met, they decided to meet in 'sections' in smaller localities. It was later reported that this plan worked very well, that Chartist activity was as enthusiastic and as determined as ever. After the eleven leaders had been released on bail, the Chartists created a 'Barnsley Defence Fund' for the legal representation of these men at their impending trial. By the end of October the fund was worth about £80.⁹⁶

There was a whole range of Chartist activity in the closing months of 1839. On Sunday September 22nd the Chartists of Sheffield, Barnsley and the surrounding villages walked in processions to Hood Hill for a religious camp meeting. A service was held during which hymns, selected for the occasion, were sung. The preacher was the Rev. W. Thornton of Bradford.⁹⁷ On November 20th the Barnsley Chartists held a tea party in the Odd Fellows hall.⁹⁸ O'Connor's visit in December was marked by the usual enthusiasm and excitement.⁹⁹ In December the magistrates complained to the Home Office that "nightly meetings of persons calling themselves Socialists" were attended by "the lowest and worst order." The word 'socialism', asserted the magistrates, was a euphemism for 'Chartism' because the main speakers at these meetings were, George Uttley and Thomas Lingard, two Chartists who had been released on bail.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ The Northern Star, Oct. 26, 1839, p. 5; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., p. 116. For similarities with Bradford in reorganization into sections and collections on behalf of imprisoned Chartists see A.J. Peacock, Bradford Chartism, 1838-1840, (York, 1969), p. 23.

⁹⁷ Burland, op.cit., p. 117; The Leeds Times, Sept. 28, 1839, p. 8.

⁹⁸ Burland, op.cit., p. 126.

⁹⁹ The Northern Star, Dec. 28, 1839, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ P.R.O., H.O. 40/51: H.B. Cooke to Lord Russell, Dec. 18, 1839.

The 'Socialist' meetings provoked a strong reaction from the local clergy. On December 29th the Rev. R.E. Roberts, incumbent of St. George's, delivered a militant sermon against the Socialists, whose character he found "odious and despicable in the extreme." Their notions respecting property might sound palatable, but they were "as irrational and impracticable" as they were "unscriptural":

Distinctions of rank, of wealth, and of station, have existed in all ages; and we are given to understand from 'the Oracles of God' that they will continue to exist even to the end. To attempt to overturn this order of things is, therefore not only to resist a Divine appointment, and to be guilty of the sin of fighting against God, but it is utterly and absolutely impracticable. ... There must necessarily be a difference so long as one man is virtuous, and another is vicious, - so long as one man is sober, and another rises up early in the morning that he may follow strong drink, and continues until midnight till wine, or other intoxicating liquors inflame him, so long as one man studies to be quiet, and to do his honest business, and to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and other men work disorderly, or working not at all, but are busybodies, intruding into things which they ought not. 101

Although there was some overlapping in personnel, Socialism was not identical to Chartism. But, essentially, the Chartists attacked the system of privilege which the reverend gentleman so staunchly defended in his sermon. So apart from the magistrates' repressive measures, the working-class movement had to face a barrage of 'theological' invective against its cause.

101 Rev. R.E. Roberts, The Christian Minister's Warning Against 'Evil Men and Seducers': A Sermon, (Barnsley, 1840).

Although there is said to have been some contact between the Newport insurgents and some of the Yorkshire Chartists,¹⁰² the nature of such contact is befogged by so much uncertainty that the issue will probably never be resolved.¹⁰³ The only Barnsley Chartist who claimed to have had prior knowledge of the Rising was William Ashton, who later blamed O'Connor for failing to prevent it from taking place. At the time, Ashton himself was job-hunting in France.¹⁰⁴ The extent to which the Barnsley Chartists had anything to do with the attempted risings nearer home on January 11th-12th, 1840 at Bradford, Dewsbury and Sheffield is, again, not clear. It was not until two weeks later on January 29th that the magistrates at Barnsley appointed special constables in the belief that "a similar riot was about to happen" as had occurred at Sheffield, Dewsbury and Bradford. The magistrates alleged that the Chartists had acquired pikes and guns.¹⁰⁵ Later Crabtree admitted that he had advance information about the attempted rising at Dewsbury and other places but had avoided getting involved.¹⁰⁶ It seems that the idea of an insurrection did not appeal to the Barnsley Chartists. The tragedy of Grange Moor was still fresh in the minds of such Chartists as Vallance and Collins who had narrowly escaped the gallows. In fact the allegorical account of the incident, which ridiculed it, had

¹⁰² See Peacock, op.cit., pp. 28-34.

¹⁰³ See Thomas Frost, Forty Years' Recollections: Literary and Political, (1880), Ch. VII.

¹⁰⁴ See Gammage, op.cit., p. 263.

¹⁰⁵ P.R.O., H.O.40/51: Appointment of special constables, proclamation signed by H.B. Cooke & Geoffrey Wentworth. For the attempted risings at Sheffield, Bradford & Dewsbury, see H.O.40/57; & Peacock, op.cit., 24ff., & John Salt, Chartism in South Yorkshire (Sheffield, 1967), pp. 16-20.

¹⁰⁶ P.R.O., H.O.20/10 Examination of Joseph Crabtree in Wakefield prison, Jan. 1, 1841.

been published in the previous year.¹⁰⁷ Whereas it is possible that a few Chartist leaders may have had advance knowledge of the planned insurrections, these leaders had no wish to be involved. Nevertheless, collections in Barnsley for the defence of the 'Welsh patriots' were quite generous. The Barnsley Chartists joined their colleagues elsewhere in memorializing the Queen for a pardon of Frost, Williams and Jones.¹⁰⁸

The trial of the Barnsley Chartists at the York Assizes took place on March 19th 1840. Crabtree, Ashton and Hoey were found guilty of unlawful and seditious assembly and conspiracy to disturb the peace and incite others to hatred of the Government and the Constitution. They were sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The other eight were found guilty of unlawful assembly and discharged on their own recognizance, and bound over to keep the peace and to be of good behaviour.¹⁰⁹

A great deal was done in Barnsley on behalf of the three imprisoned Chartists. In May the town and neighbourhood were divided into several districts, with two collectors in each. The money went towards helping the families of the prisoners. In spite of the depression in the linen trade, the response was good. In July a public meeting adopted a petition to Parliament for a remission of the sentence on Crabtree, Ashton and Hoey.

¹⁰⁷ Robert M'Lintock, Miscellaneous Poems (Barnsley, 1839). For similarity between Grange Moor and Newport see Anon, A Night with the Chartists (1847) and Ch. Eight above.

¹⁰⁸ The Northern Star, Jan. 4 & Feb. 15, 1840 pp. 4 & 7 resp.

¹⁰⁹ P.R.O., ASSI. 41/16, The Northern Star, Mar. 21, 1840, p. 4; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 133f.

The petition, which was presented to the Commons by Thomas Duncombe, carried about 3,000 signatures. Petitions were also sent on behalf of other Chartist prisoners, including the Newport insurgents. When Hoey was prematurely released from Wakefield because of an illness, the Barnsley Chartists contributed money to enable him to go on holiday in Ireland.¹¹⁰

The fact that three prominent local leaders were in prison and that eight more had not been completely freed at the trial created a difficult situation. From the Spring of 1840 Chartist activity in Barnsley was rather low-keyed. The re-organization of the national movement in July 1840, in the shape of the National Charter Association, gave the local movement a new lease of life. But the result of the Manchester Conference was not the formation of one but two rival Barnsley associations. The first was the Barnsley Democratic Association and the second, the Barnsley Charter Association, both of which adopted the organizational plan agreed at the Manchester Conference.

The Democratic Association met at the home of William Preston, the Railway Tavern, on August 17th. They adopted an address to the "brothers in political bondage" in Barnsley and the District. This extremely militant and rather emotionally charged address was signed by none other than Arthur Collins in his capacity as chairman of the association. It called upon the people of Barnsley to lend their full support to the revitalized Chartist movement:

Will you, who have hitherto fearlessly
defied the craft and power of your
enemies - will you the brave and
honest men, who have so often
stood undaunted before the threats
of power and tyranny - will you allow

¹¹⁰ The Northern Star, May 30, & July 11, 1840.

yourselves to be enslaved by the
weakest, the most contemptible
government that ever figured in
this country? Forbid it. Justice!
Yield, if you prefer poverty to plenty -
yield, and hug your chains, if
you prefer slavery to liberty
- yield, if you would sink
beneath the weight of accumulated
misery, and allow the despots to ride
roughshod over your sinking and
emaciated frames! Lick the dust
on which you kneel before the oppressor!
But, if you be men, stand forward now,
and once more defy the enemy, as
you were wont. ... Arouse, then ye
men of Barnsley, and assist in striking
off the galling bonds of despotic infamy!
Show your oppressors that freedom
pervades your breasts, and that all the
waters of Whig and Tory domination
cannot quench the flame,
'For Better the tomb or the prison
Illum'd by the patriot's name
Than the trophies of those who have risen
On liberty's ruins to fame.' 111

The Barnsley Charter Association came into being a week later on August 24th. In fact it emerged from a meeting of the old Barnsley Northern Union which assumed the new name in accordance with the programme of the July Conference at Manchester. The cause of this schism within the Chartist ranks is not very clear. It would not be valid to see it in terms of the old versus the young radicals, for the two Grange Moor veterans, Collins and Vallance were in separate camps. Ethnic differences do not seem significant either. Irish Chartists tended to be more conspicuous in the Democratic Association, but the Charter Association held their weekly

¹¹¹ Ibid., Aug. 22, 1840, p. 1; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 142f.

meetings at the home of Peter Hoey, an Irishman. There were no obvious ideological or policy differences. Both did similar things, like agitating for the Charter and collecting money to assist the families of imprisoned Chartists. One difference was that the Charter Association, unlike its rival, would not hold Sunday political meetings as they were, in the members' view, "calculated to excite prejudice." So, probably, there might have been differences in the religious affiliations of the two bodies. It seems, however, that the most important factor was that the Democratic Association was created by highly militant Chartists (as the wording of their address indicates) who may have found wanting the leadership of the old Barnsley Northern Union which was converted into the Charter Association. In response to an appeal for unity from the Worsborough Common Charter Association, the two bodies united into a new Barnsley Charter Association in December 1840.¹¹² Membership of the new body increased tremendously in 1841.

Regular meetings continued to be held throughout 1841 and representatives on the Chartist General Council were elected. One major focus of Chartist activity was the plight of Chartist prisoners, especially the three Barnsley leaders and the "Welsh patriots," Frost, Williams and Jones. Many petitions were sent on their behalf.¹¹³ The champion of the prisoners' and transported convicts' cause was Frank Mirfield who had returned late in 1840 at the end of his transportation period in Australia.¹¹⁴ In 1841 the Chartists were still influential enough to frustrate the local anti-Corn Law campaign.

¹¹² The Northern Star, Sept. 5, Oct. 17, Oct. 31, Dec. 26, 1840; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 143, 144, 152, 154.

¹¹³ The Northern Star, Jan. 19, Apr. 10, May 22, Aug. 28, 1841.

¹¹⁴ Mirfield, it will be recalled, had been transported for his part in the weavers' riots of 1829.

An anti-Corn Law public meeting in August passed Frank Mirfield's resolution which stated that the only way to end all class legislation, including the Corn laws, was for Parliament to make the People's Charter the law of the land.¹¹⁵

In 1842 the Chartist movement reached a new climax. A large public meeting on January 10th agreed to send a memorial to the Queen for the restoration of Frost, Williams and Jones. The meeting also adopted the National Petition for the Charter and elected Feargus O'Connor, George Binns and Frank Mirfield as Barnsley representatives at the National Convention. It was later reported that 6,800 people from Barnsley and the neighbourhood had signed the Petition.¹¹⁶

Although the 'Plug Plot' of 1842 started apparently as a mere industrial dispute, it soon assumed a political dimension and the Chartists in the industrial districts found themselves involved in a general strike movement.¹¹⁷ Unrest and stoppage of work were reported in Bradford, Leeds, Halifax, Huddersfield, Skipton and Dewsbury.¹¹⁸ On August 15th hand-bills were distributed in Barnsley and the neighbourhood calling for a meeting of all working men and women to consider the question of a general strike. The magistrates issued a written warning against such a meeting, swore in special constables, alerted the yeomanry and called in troops from the temporary barracks at Mount Vernon. Five days later, there was a riot in the township of Clayton West, five miles from Barnsley.¹¹⁹ In November

¹¹⁵ The Northern Star, Aug. 21, 1841, p. 8.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Jan. 15, May 7, 1842; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., p. 193.

¹¹⁷ See F.C. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists, (Manchester, 1966 ed.), p. 10.

¹¹⁸ P.R.O., H.O.45/264.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., Thomas Marshall to Sir James Graham, Aug. 15 & 20, 1842; The Northern Star, Aug. 20, 1842, p. 8; Eli Hoyle "History of Barnsley to 1850" (B.R.L.), p. 330.

the Barnsley Chartists defied the magistrates' ban on public meetings when they met to elect delegates to the Birmingham Conference in the following month.¹²⁰ From this moment the movement began to weaken: there was a reduced level of activity and the popular enthusiasm, which Chartism had enjoyed in the town from about 1838, began to dry up. Even the hard-core Chartists started to move in different directions. But before we can trace and explain this process of disintegration, it would be illuminating to examine the different forces that came into play during the popular phase of Chartism.

The role of economic depressions in this phase of the movement constitutes the major theme of Chartist historiography. It is now generally recognized that the Chartist strongholds were those areas with a monocultural economy, highly susceptible to economic crises which were capable of inflicting misery on a whole mass of workers. This was more so if the staple industry supported a moribund trade like hand-loom weaving. Thus in areas like Bristol, which had a diversified industrial structure, popular support for Chartism left a great deal to be desired.¹²¹ Like the mass of the Leicester framework knitters, the majority of labouring Barnsley depended on one trade for a living: hand-loom linen weaving. Like the

¹²⁰ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 204.

¹²¹ See John Cannon, The Chartists in Bristol (1964), p. 15.

Leicester stocking industry, the Barnsley linen trade was badly depressed in the period 1837-42. Support for the Chartist movement in both towns was strong and widespread.¹²² Words like 'hunger', 'misery', 'pining' or 'emaciated' constituted the stock-in-trade of the Chartist orators at the heavily attended public meetings. And there was plenty of evidence before everybody's eyes. These were the days of the fund-starved 'relief committees' and emigrations to America and the Continent.¹²³ The role of economic distress in Chartism must therefore be taken seriously.

This said, one cannot, however, subscribe to the view that Chartism, or political radicalism generally, was the "lowest common denominator which all workers might seize upon when some temporary setback seemed particularly severe and the more usual form of defence seemed inappropriate or had proved unsuccessful."¹²⁴ We have been correctly reminded that hunger need not necessarily have evoked a political response. Other forms of protest could have been resorted to.¹²⁵ The function of the economic distress was to bring into sharp focus the brutal realities of the class-based economic, social and political arrangement in society as it was then constituted. Chartism was not simply a demand for a redress of immediate grievances. More importantly, it made a critique of the existing social order and presented a programme for an alternative one, based on ideas which had developed over a long period of history and which, by the Chartist period, had gained currency among the industrial working class. As we saw

¹²² For Leicester see J.F.C. Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester" in Briggs, op.cit., pp. 100, 121ff. See also Roy A. Church, Victorian Nottingham, 1815-1900 (1966), passim.

¹²³ See Chapters Two and Four above.

¹²⁴ Bythell, op.cit., p. 217.

¹²⁵ Dorothy Thompson, The Early Chartists (1971), pp. 12, 29f.

above, the Chartist wheels were already rolling in Barnsley during the trade boom of the mid-1830's.¹²⁶ When O'Connor came to address overcrowded public meetings in December 1835, every hand-loom in the town and its environs, was fully employed; the weavers had just had a pay rise and they gained another one next January. O'Connor was pleased that, though their bellies were full, the Barnsley working people had turned up in great numerical strength to listen to him. His argument on that occasion is worthy of note:

I do not think that I have acted unwisely in coming amongst you at a period when you are not in want and starvation. I would rather see my audience comfortable than in a state of want, because now none will come to hear me, none will give credence to me, or support our cause, other than those who are of firm principles, and not urged by want. 127

It is therefore essential, for a fuller understanding of the movement, to address ourselves to questions which pertain to Chartist motivation and consciousness.

The language of the Chartists was clearly the language of class in the sense that they expressed the sentiment of the solidarity of the 'working classes', the producers of all wealth; and that they (the Chartists) showed an awareness of who was excluded from that solidarity. The groups they felt apart from were essentially those they saw as monopolising political power: the aristocracy, since the Norman conquest, and the middle class, since the 1832 Reform Act. Their antagonism was justified

¹²⁶ Section II of this Chapter.

¹²⁷ The Leeds Times, Dec. 26, 1835, p. 4.

by a sense of exploitation at the hands of these groups who, they believed, produced nothing. The radical press of the 1830's had exposed the literate working-class public to at least the rudiments of the theory of exploitation as propounded by people like Thompson, Hodgkin and, especially, Bronterre O'Brien. In the mainstream of Chartist rhetoric, however, the exploitation of labour was rarely analysed, as Hodgkin and others did, in terms of the relationship of the social classes to the means of production, but rather in terms of the control of political power. There were two themes.

The dominant one was that which saw the exploitation of labour as a result of inequitable taxation and its attendant evils: wars, pensions, sinecures and the National Debt. This was already current during the 1816-20 period. Some Chartists perceptively, though not lucidly, argued that property was protected by law but that labour was not. To some extent, this latter theme came near to analysing exploitation in terms of the relationship of the social classes to the means of production.

Most of the Barnsley Chartist orators tended to analyse the exploitation of labour in the Cobbettite language of 'Old Corruption'. Perhaps this is explained by the fact that Barnsley Chartism was strongly rooted in this tradition. The central argument of the Chartist Manifesto issued after the visit of the delegation from the Birmingham Political Union in June 1838 is eloquent testimony to the dominance of the tradition. The political establishment, argued the Manifesto, was a class of men who produced nothing and yet, at the expense of labour who produced all the wealth, enjoyed "all the good things which this world can produce." The main example given was that of the Queen Mother: "the poor widow who could not keep herself, and on whom our law makers have settled a pension

of one hundred thousand pounds a year."

A weaver would have to weave twelve yards of good substantial linen a day for six thousand five hundred and seventy-five years to earn as much as she receives in one year; and an agricultural labourer would have had to commence working when the world began, and worked to the present time ... to have earned as much money as would pay her one year's pension; or, in other words it would take four thousand men, and those four thousand men, with the assistance of animal power, must cultivate two hundred thousand acres of land, or two thousand farms of one hundred acres each, to earn as much money as our law makers give annually to this one woman, who is a foreigner, and who never did a penny's worth of good for England in her life.

The only way to end such obscenities and to arrest the deterioration of the condition of the working class was for the latter to secure the right to elect its own representatives who would make laws which were consonant with their economic and social welfare.¹²⁸

But intertwined with this argument of the use of political power to promote their social and economic welfare was the rhetoric of liberty or freedom or natural justice. Both the figure of the 'free-born Englishman' and Paine's 'natural rights' were still around. Thus the Whigs and Tories were generally referred to as 'tyrants' or 'oppressors'. As well as being seen as a struggle for social and material welfare, the campaign for the Charter was always referred to as a movement for the emancipation of the working class from slavery. "The hand of oppressors," wrote Amos Maudsley

¹²⁸ Chartist Manifesto (B.R.L.).

when he was on the run after the demonstration of August 12th 1839, "can never erase from our hearts those undying principles of liberty which we have been bold to acknowledge, and which we have sworn to defend before the high altar of the God of Nature. Human power may enslave the body, but it cannot shake the empire of opinion."¹²⁹ Their language was that of a colonized people, heard so often in pre-independence Africa.

The Chartists saw themselves as being at war with oppression and vested interests to whom they always referred as "our enemies." The tone of their expression was indicative of a deep hatred of the upper and middle classes. The target was the whole 'system' but their hatred was translated into bitter feelings against the immediate representatives of the system. In Barnsley where the class structure was fairly simplified, the Chartists were at war (and it was open war) with four distinct categories: the magistrates, the manufacturers, the 'lower middle class', represented mainly by the shopkeepers, and what they called 'conservative operatives'. The magistrates were the very personification of the system of oppression. In his letter to the magistrates after the arrest of the Chartist leaders in August 1839, Ashton informed them that by directing "the political drama of legal tyranny and persecution," the magistrates had clearly manifested their "undying malignity and hatred towards the working classes."¹³⁰ Amos Maudsley referred to the manufacturers and other members of the middle class as "the aristocracy of pounds, shillings and pence." "They starve the people," he said, "and, if possible, would coin the people's hearts' blood to prolong their reign."¹³¹ During its campaign of exclusive

¹²⁹ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 126f.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 119.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 127.

dealing in April 1839 the Female Union declared that "the major part of the shopkeepers of this town ... know not of the sympathy with the distresses of the working classes."¹³² Later it was observed that the shopkeepers had given £3 to £10 each "to keep specials and cavalry in the town to overawe us." The Chartists seriously discussed the idea of setting up co-operative stores of their own to "give some of these gentry a cooling."¹³³ Those few working class individuals who either acted as magistrates' informers or appeared as prosecution witnesses during the trial of the Chartists, were branded as traitors to their own kind, tools of the system. The most common epithets used to describe them were 'sycophants' and 'crawling minions'. William Ashton told one of these:

I neither censure you nor a few of your stamp
for your cowardly and sneaking conduct for I am
aware you cannot help it. Nature has formed you
with those weak grovelling dispositions fit only
to be tools and slaves of the baser portion of
society, therefore I would rather pity than
censure you. 134

The class nature of the Chartist struggle can be clearly seen in the kind of inhabitants who applied for the protection of the military. One Barnsley petition, asking for troops, which was sent to the Home Office on June 10th 1839, was signed by 10 parochial officers, 34 linen manufacturers, 4 coal and iron masters, a banker, 2 solicitors, 2 surgeons, 2 master-craftsmen and 28 retailers and wholesalers.¹³⁵

It is arguable that the Chartists did not pursue the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the sense that they did not want the working class to monopolize the administration of the political and economic systems. They wanted equality and 'justice' for all. What they sought was a partnership in the political process of law making in order to protect themselves.

¹³² The Northern Star, Ap. 27, 1839, p. 4.

¹³³ Ibid., Sept. 14, 1839, p. 4.

¹³⁴ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 120.

¹³⁵ P.R.O., H.O.40/51.

At a meeting of the Barnsley Charter Association in February 1841 the Chartists resolved:

We shall never suffer ourselves to be led away to agitate for anything less than the People's Charter; at the same time we would be glad to see the middle classes come forward and save themselves from inevitable ruin, by co-operating with us for the attainment of political rights for all classes of the community. 136

As has been pointed out, too much emphasis has been placed upon the quarrelsome 'national' leaders.¹³⁷ The humble local leaders, some of them anonymous, played a crucial role. In Barnsley the predominant majority were linen weavers: Ashton, Vallance, Collins, Hoey, Crabtree, Mirfield, Wilkinson, or Burland. They were self-educated men with a command of the English language and a mastery of political oratory. Often the same people led their fellow working men during the trade disputes. The real work of political mobilization is attributable to them. They were conversant with radical ideas, and they were highly respected and listened to by their followers.

Among the national figures O'Connor enjoyed almost unqualified support from the Barnsley Chartists. From 1835, when they invited him to lead them, they did not desert him to the end. He christened Barnsley "the right eye of Yorkshire." Two historians have referred to Barnsley as the birthplace of the "O'Connor cult."¹³⁸ This is a heavily loaded expression

¹³⁶ The Northern Star, Feb. 6, 1841, p. 1. This is a difficult point. It is arguable that, conscious of its numerical advantage over the other classes, the working class hoped that its will would become dominant once they had been admitted into the political system. See K. Marx & F. Engels, Articles on Britain (Moscow, 1971 ed.), p. 119.

¹³⁷ Iorwerth Prothero, "Chartism in London," Past and Present, No. 44 (Aug. 1969), p. 101.

¹³⁸ Donald Read & Eric Glasgow, Feargus O'Connor: Irishman and Chartist (1961), p. 77.

but, indeed, the Barnsley Chartists followed O'Connor with what approximated to the adulation of a saint. In November 1840 the Barnsley Chartists who held a dinner party to celebrate Hunt's birthday, were presented with an infant son of their colleague, Edward Sykes, to add to the joys of the occasion; the infant had just been named after Feargus O'Connor.¹³⁹ In O'Connor's innumerable battles with his enemies, the Barnsley Chartists were invariably on his side. When Daniel O'Connell attacked O'Connor, he was denounced in Barnsley as "a wily pretender and expediency, working agitator."¹⁴⁰ When in 1838 the LWMA reproached O'Connor for encouraging working men to follow "idols" instead of "principles", the Barnsley Radical Association publicly declared their confidence in him.¹⁴¹ In 1841, when O'Connor's leadership of the movement was under attack, and when people like Lovett deserted the mainstream of Chartism, Barnsley again stuck to O'Connor. In April 1841 the Barnsley Charter Association declared:

We, the Chartists of Barnsley, have the most unbounded confidence in Feargus O'Connor and are determined to stand by him and the Star, so long as he and that journal advocate the poor man's rights, and we will treat as traitors to our cause all those who should dare to attempt to alienate our affections from that true and uncompromizing friend of the working classes. 142

¹³⁹ The Northern Star, Nov. 14, 1840, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ The Leeds Times, Ap. 8, 1837, p. 3. See also Idem: Nov. 5, 1836, p. 5; Dec. 17, 1836, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Mar. 3, 1838, p. 5.

¹⁴² Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 174.

When, in 1842, William Ashton, the popular and militant Chartist, quarrelled with O'Connor over the Newport affair,¹⁴³ he was disowned by the Barnsley Chartists.¹⁴⁴ Barnsley's confidence in O'Connor was clearly demonstrated by the enthusiastic support which the town's Chartists lent to his Land Scheme.¹⁴⁵ How does one explain O'Connor's popularity in Barnsley?

In the mainstream of Chartist historiography O'Connor is the villain of the movement: the architect of its ruin who played a cantankerous and therefore divisive role: the self-seeking power-monger who was devoid of logic or principle. He preached fire and sword, inciting the hungry masses to commit acts of desperation, but he did not himself have the courage to kill a fly. Yet, the masses followed him. They followed him, we are told, because his headstrong language appealed to their hungry bellies.¹⁴⁶ One historian has even suggested that, despite himself, O'Connor was acceptable to the labouring masses (who still thought with a "peasant mentality") because he was a gentleman.¹⁴⁷

It is wrong to view O'Connor as an opportunist who usurped the leadership of Chartism which ought to have been in the hands of Lovett and others in the London Working Men's Association. The labouring masses in the North, who constituted the backbone of the movement, met O'Connor

¹⁴³ See Gammage, op.cit., p. 263; Wray Vamplew, "Barnsley, 'The Right Eye of Yorkshire': a Study of Local Chartism." (Unpublished B.Sc. thesis, University of Southampton, 1964), pp. 24-26.

¹⁴⁴ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., pp. 197, 214.

¹⁴⁵ Salt, op.cit., p.23.

¹⁴⁶ Hovell, op.cit., passim; Ward, op.cit., passim; Read and Glasgow, op.cit., passim; Briggs, op.cit., p. 9 et passim.

¹⁴⁷ R.N. Soffer, "Attitudes and Allegiances in the Unskilled North, 1830-1850", International Review of Social History, Vol.X, pt. 3 (1965), pp. 439 & 442.

as early as 1835 before the LWMA was born. The programme which they discussed then contained all the cardinal points of what later became the People's Charter. Under O'Connor's leadership the working class attained such unity as had never been experienced since the days of Peterloo. The elitist men of the LWMA, who founded an association for "the intelligent and influential portion" of the working class, were unfit to lead a mass-based, class-conscious movement. While O'Connor preached independent working-class action to an alienated mass of workers, Lovett and his colleagues counselled for, indeed pursued, class collaboration. It is therefore not surprising that the LWMA never gained a foothold in militant Barnsley. In the town's radical tradition the role of an influential leader who thoroughly identified himself with the aspirations of the working class, had a long history. Many aspects of O'Connor's personality equipped him well to occupy the vacuum left by Hunt and Cobbett.¹⁴⁸

Another contributory factor to O'Connor's popularity in Barnsley was the considerable presence of the Irish. In 1841 first-generation Irish immigrants in the town constituted 5 per cent of the population. A disproportionately large part of them depended on linen weaving for a living. Two hundred and fifty-three individuals, constituting 81 per cent

¹⁴⁸ See James Epstein, "Chartism", Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No. 28 (Spring 1974), pp. 70f. The attempt by R.N. Soffer, loc.cit. to compare O'Connor's leadership with that of such Tory radicals as Oastler and Stephens is belied by the fact that these men quickly lost Chartist support when they ceased to identify themselves with Chartism. Collections for the Oastler Liberation Fund in Barnsley in 1843-44 were managed and supported by Tory gentlemen: See Fleet Papers, Jan. 6, 1844, pp. 5f.; see also Dorothy Thompson, "Notes on Aspects of Chartist Leadership," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No. 15 (Autumn 1967), pp. 28-33.

of the non-dependant Irish-born population, were hand-loom weavers. The equivalent proportion for the overall non-dependant population of the town was only 44 per cent. Of the whole first-generation Irish immigrant population, 91 per cent lived in or near Wilson's Piece, the weavers' stronghold in the southern section of the town.¹⁴⁹ There was also a considerable number of second-generation Irish immigrants, like William Ashton or Henry Hunt Collins.

The wave of Irish immigration between the end of the Napoleonic wars and the economic depressions of the late 1820's appears to have evoked feelings of resentment among some English workers. In June 1828 there was a factional fight between the English and the Irish which ended in the death of one James Moss, an Englishman. Both sides armed themselves with bottles, sticks and other weapons, and May Day Green "was turned into a battlefield." The riot Act was read.¹⁵⁰ The incident seems to have been the last manifestation of ethnic animosity. In fact, from then on Irishmen played a prominent role in the struggles of the Barnsley working class. Barnsley is a clear case of a place where class consciousness appears to have eclipsed ethnic consciousness. It is pointed out as the one place in Northern England where the majority of the Irish immigrants allied with Feargus O'Connor rather than his rival, Daniel O'Connell, who was a bitter opponent of Chartism.¹⁵¹ Irish working men

¹⁴⁹ Compiled from P.R.O., H.O. 107/1325.

¹⁵⁰ Hoyle, op.cit., p. 260.

¹⁵¹ J.H. Treble, "O'Connor, O'Connell and the Attitudes of Irish Immigrants towards Chartism in the North of England, 1838-1848," in J. Butt & I.F. Clarke (eds.), The Victorian and Social Protest (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 41 et passim. The author's attempt to play down the role of the Irish in Northern Chartism (outside Barnsley) is not entirely convincing. See also John Archer Jackson, The Irish in Britain (1963), Ch. 6; R. O'Higgins, "The Irish Influence in the Chartist Movement," Past & Present, No. 20 (Nov. 1961), pp. 83-94.

in Barnsley had fought side by side with their English colleagues in the numerous battles which culminated in the Chartist movement. In the Chartist struggle a rift on ethnic lines was therefore not likely. Arthur Collins, veteran of the Grange Moor rising, first introduced the unstamped journals into Barnsley. Peter Hoey, Patrick Flanigan and William Ashton were leading figures in the 1829 strike. Peter Hoey, whose house was the Chartists' meeting place, was a long serving president of the linen weavers' union in the 1830's. Others like David Pilmore, Michael Seagrave or John Shaw took a prominent part in the radical activities which preceded Chartism. But these men remained temperamentally Irish and closely followed and participated in Irish affairs. It was partly O'Connor's convincing argument for the co-ordination of the Chartist struggle with the struggle for the liberation of Ireland that evoked their loyalty.¹⁵² They fought their liberation struggle as inhabitants of two enslaved worlds: the British working class and the Irish colonized nation. As a result, Barnsley Chartism was intertwined with Irish affairs.

It would appear that only Irish Catholics were Chartists. They denounced the town's Orangemen whom they accused of acting as special constables. The Orangemen's slogan in Ireland, alleged the Chartists, was 'no popery', but in England it was 'no liberty'. Like the rest of the town's Chartists, they were hostile to Daniel O'Connell. When O'Connell addressed a Repeal of the Union rally in Manchester on June 8th 1841, he denounced the Chartists and encouraged his followers to support the anti-Corn Law League. On the next day O'Connellite Irishmen, assisted by policemen, routed the Chartists who were trying to sabotage a Manchester anti-Corn Law rally. Many Chartists were injured and one later died.¹⁵³ The Irish Chartists of Barnsley were furious. On June 14th more than a hundred of them met and condemned the behaviour of the misled "Irish Hottentots who have cast a stigma upon our beloved country." They censured "that base and treacherous apostate, Daniel O'Connell, alias the Big Beggarman "for his anti-Chartist campaign.

¹⁵² See Read & Glasgow, op.cit., pp. 73ff.

¹⁵³ See Treble, op.cit., p. 54; The Northern Star June 12, 1841, p. 1.

They expressed confidence in O'Connor whose political career they found to be "manly, honest, determined and truly patriotic."¹⁵⁴

In October 1841, one hundred and thirteen Irish Catholic Chartists sent a letter to the Rev. Patrick Ryan, parish priest of Donnabate near Dublin. The Rev. Ryan had formerly been a parish priest in Barnsley and was one of the extremely few Irish Catholic priests to join the Universal Suffrage Association, a body co-ordinating the various Chartist groups in Ireland.¹⁵⁵ Before the Irish Chartists sent the letter, they submitted it to a meeting of the English Chartists which endorsed it. The letter constituted an exposition of their basic philosophy. They congratulated the Rev. Ryan for his support of the Chartist cause. They supported the cause of Irish freedom but they regretted that the energies of the Irish masses had been expended in "attempting to remove minor wrongs, whilst the power that afflicts them remains in full vigour." The struggle for the Charter was of profound relevance to the Irish struggle, for without universal suffrage "liberty is only a phantom that may be destroyed by the caprice or whim of an individual, and the profits of industry made the inheritance of the privileged few." They condemned Daniel O'Connell's "affrontery" for branding the working class of England as enemies to the liberty of Ireland. The People's Charter, the letter said, demanded the same liberty for Ireland as for England, for "alliance of power and influence of wealth which inflicts so much misery on Ireland is the same that oppresses England." "Does O'Connell imagine," they asked, "that a Parliament sitting in Dublin, elected by the present constituency, would extend the franchise?"

¹⁵⁴ The Northern Star, June 19, 1841, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ O'Higgins, op.cit., pp. 87ff.

The Charter, they argued, was an essential precondition for real Irish freedom.¹⁵⁶ The Barnsley Irish Chartists were faithful apostles of O'Connor's call for an alliance between the English and Irish working class. In the Barnsley Charter Association they constituted a 'committee on Irish affairs'.¹⁵⁷

The Irish Repeal Association formed in Barnsley on May 21st 1843 was dominated, if not entirely controlled by Chartists, such as Hoey, Daly, O'Leary and Seagrave. Peter Hoey was its chairman.¹⁵⁸ The Barnsley Repeal Association rallied behind O'Connor. The members argued that, in spite of O'Connor's long-standing hostility to Daniel O'Connell, he (O'Connor) had always advocated the repeal of the Union between England and Ireland.¹⁵⁹ Irish politics remained a major ingredient of Barnsley Chartism till 1848 when, in fact, that year's Chartist disturbances were dominated by the town's Irish Democratic Confederation.¹⁶⁰

One final point worth examining concerns 'physical' and 'moral force' Chartism. An unqualified distinction is a convenient mental construct which obscures more than it reveals. First, it blurs the varieties in each tradition. Secondly, it overlooks the considerable degree of overlapping in the two traditions, especially as far as the authorities and some other observers were concerned.

¹⁵⁶ The Northern Star, Oct. 30, 1841, p.7; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., pp. 186-188.

¹⁵⁷ The Northern Star, Aug. 14, 1841, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., June 3, 1843, p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., June 10, 1843, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ See below, p.526.

'Physical force' Chartism consisted of a wide spectrum. There were the insurrectionary plans, like those at Newport, Sheffield, Bradford and Dewsbury, aimed at a violent overthrow of the Government. Barnsley never actively participated in them. Even within this tradition there were individuals, like Peter Bussy of Bradford, who secretly dropped out at crucial moments. The weapons procured by Chartists in Barnsley and most other places were not intended for executing a revolution, but rather for self-defence - a right which, according to Chartist rhetoric, was sanctioned by the English constitution. Thus, although a public meeting decided against it at the last minute, some Barnsley Chartists had intended to take arms to the Peep Green county demonstration of May 1839 - a demonstration which the Lord Lieutenant and his magistrates had vowed to suppress.

Much of what was branded as 'physical force' was, in fact, what has been described as the 'verbal bellicosity' of leaders like O'Connor or Harney.¹⁶¹ Their violent expressions, copied by such local leaders as William Ashton, were intended, as was demonstrated by the wide gap between talk and action, to do no more than frighten the establishment into giving in to Chartist demands. In moments of crises, as in the Summer of 1839, this violent 'stock-in-trade' was resorted to even by such champions of 'moral force' as Joseph Crabtree and Joseph Wilkinson. Admittedly, such talk was liable to incite masses into acts of violence. In Barnsley, this did not happen.

What sometimes passed for 'physical force' was nothing more than the wild tales put out by the anti-Chartist press. Reporting on the proceedings of a Barnsley public meeting on April 17th 1839, at which O'Connor was

¹⁶¹ Dorothy Thompson, The Early Chartists, op.cit., p. 18.

present, the Leeds Mercury claimed that, in his speech, Joseph Crabtree advocated violence to obtain the Charter and "talked freely of bullets, blood and sacrifice."¹⁶² What Crabtree had actually said in that context was:

We do not want blood. If our oppressors have shed blood, we should not follow their example by washing our hands in blood. ... Much has been said about the Radical violence but we have never evinced any disposition to riot. We are resolved no longer to see our brethren sacrificed at the shrines of avarice, monopoly and ambition. 163

There seem to have been three aspects of 'moral force' Chartism. There were those who had faith in the force of argument - a dialogue with the middle class. Still, others thought that the argument would be all the more convincing if it came from sober, intelligent and morally upright working men. The preoccupations of some Chartists with temperance, educational and religious activities were inspired by this belief.¹⁶⁴ But most of those who styled themselves as 'moral force' Chartists (probably the majority in the movement) believed that the force of argument was not efficacious unless it was backed by the force of numbers. The public demonstrations and rallies were aimed at impressing upon the political establishment the numerical strength of the Chartists. Most of the Barnsley Chartist activity, especially up to 1842, belonged to this variety.

¹⁶² The Leeds Mercury, Ap. 13, 1839, p. 5.

¹⁶³ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley," op.cit., p. 102.

¹⁶⁴ See David Jones, Chartism and the Chartists (1975), pp. 39-57.

As far as the regime and most of its supporters were concerned, the latter tradition of demonstrating numerical strength was almost as much an act of coercion as were the attempts to achieve the Charter by force of arms. In fact the numerous 'moral force' rallies in Barnsley were regarded by the frightened magistrates and 'principal inhabitants' as a threat to peace or, in fact, as preludes to general riot and even revolution. These meetings were usually closely watched, if not sometimes dispersed, by armed constables, cavalry and military. Reports about them in the Home Office correspondence read incredibly alarmist. 'Physical force' and 'moral force' Chartism are complicated concepts; they are better understood if an attempt is made to penetrate them in the way we have done.

The foregoing analysis of the Chartist events up to 1842 is not an obituary of the movement. It is an attempt to understand its main strands during the period when it commanded a mass following. In the years after 1842 Chartism was an ailing, though not a departed force. In the end, it was destined to die. Some of its adherents either lapsed into the limbo of political passivity or pursued alternative causes.

IV: The Disintegration of Chartism:

The movement which, for a period had looked like a powerful tide that would sweep away the old order, lost its internal cohesion and ceased to be a force for the establishment to reckon with. Mainstream, or O'Connorite, Chartism ebbed as it lost both popular support and valuable leadership.

There were only brief spurts of vigorous activity in 1845 and 1848, stimulated, respectively, by O'Connor's Land Plan and the Continental Revolutions.

Some of the town's outstanding Chartist leaders, who had done so much to build up the movement, dropped out completely. Cowed or disillusioned by their experiences during and immediately after the height of the agitation, they left the town in search of greener pastures. There were those whom the Chartist encounters had taught not only independent working-class action but also circumspection. They gradually abandoned the hazardous grounds of political action and redirected their energies into the safer area of social protest. A group of ex-Chartists pursued moral and intellectual improvement. Initially this was seen as an alternative working-class struggle but, increasingly, it was regarded as a ticket to full participation in the mid-Victorian bourgeois world. The lines between the different causes of action cannot be drawn rigidly. One finds, for example, that some ex-Chartists who pursued intellectual improvement were also able to register their social protest.

The pursuit of causes alternative to political reform did not, from beginning to end, constitute a defection to the 'enemy camp'.¹⁶⁵ In fact, some of the earlier working-class institutions, especially in the 1840's, incurred the hostility of the middle class. The working men still insisted on helping themselves. But, in the nature of things, these working men struggling to better their lot, in the end pursued not class war but class

¹⁶⁵ See Theodore Rothstein, From Chartism to Labourism (1929), pp. 183f. et passim.

harmony. Trade unionism apart, they confronted not so much the bourgeoisie or the moribund aristocracy as what they perceived to be impersonal forces. As a result, they won themselves a few well wishers and even allies among the bourgeoisie.¹⁶⁶ But there were uncompromising exceptions who took the war against the establishment to their graves.

After the Birmingham Conference at the end of 1842, at which Barnsley was represented by Vallance and Mirfield, Chartist activity in the town and neighbourhood declined markedly. In 1843 only two important events took place. In April a public meeting, called at the initiative of the non-Conformist ministers, considered a petition to Parliament against the education clause of the Factory Bill. The Chartist amendment to the petition, moved by Mirfield, was approved by the meeting. The amendment welcomed the Bill inasmuch as it protected factory children but objected to the control of their education by the clergy. It called, instead, for the control of the children's education to be exercised "by the people in the manner as set forth in the People's Charter."¹⁶⁷ This would speak for a profound influence by the Chartists. Nevertheless, little else happened. At the end of November a few activists called a public meeting "for the purpose of again forming a Chartist Association in the hope of once more placing Barnsley in its former position."¹⁶⁸ This effort does not seem to have

¹⁶⁶ Though the foci and emphases are somewhat different, see Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, (1965), Ch.1.

¹⁶⁷ The Leeds Times, Ap. 15, 1843, p. 8.

¹⁶⁸ The Northern Star, Dec. 2, 1843, p. 5.

materialized. In January 1844 the last of the troops at the Mount Vernon temporary barracks returned to Sheffield (This happened in spite of the unrest among the colliers).¹⁶⁹ Barnsley did not even nominate representatives to the Chartist General Council in 1844. Nor did she make any contributions to the National Convention Fund. The Chartists' attempt to sabotage an anti-Corn Law meeting in July ended in ignominious failure.¹⁷⁰ Barnsley was not even represented at the West Riding Chartist delegate conference at Halifax in April 1845.¹⁷¹

It was the launching of O'Connors Land Scheme in 1845 that rekindled the dormant spirit of Barnsley Chartism. The Chartists' attachment to the Land Scheme was dictated by the exigencies of urban-industrialism. They saw this as an opportunity to grapple with or accommodate the industrial system; they did not, it would appear, seek to reverse the process of development by returning to the legendary 'rural harmony' of the bygone days. The Land Scheme provided an attractive outlet from the traumas of acute distress prevalent in hand-loom linen weaving. It would restore the independence, dignity, and value of labour.¹⁷² As to the relationship between the Scheme and political reform, the point remains a vexed question.¹⁷³

On May 26th 1845 an enthusiastic Chartist meeting decided to support the Land Scheme. On that occasion thirty-one persons paid their entry fee.

¹⁶⁹ P.R.O., H.O. 45/649: Letter to Sir Phillips, Jan. 26, 1844.

¹⁷⁰ The Northern Star, Dec. 16, 1843, p. 5; Feb. 17, June 1, July 13, 1844.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., Ap. 19, 1845, p. 7.

¹⁷² See Joy MacAskill, "The Chartist Land Plan" in Briggs, op.cit., 306f.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 307f.

Peter Hoey and Thomas Acclam were elected Secretary and Treasurer respectively. A five-man committee, which included Vallance and Mirfield, was also elected.¹⁷⁴ When O'Connor visited the town in August, he was impressed by the Chartists' support for the Land Scheme. He toured the nearby allotments which some of them had acquired, and later reported that, though most of the allotments were on "miserable, wet, swampy, bad land," no-one would part with his plot.¹⁷⁵ In August 1847 Thomas Acclam and his family, who were due to leave for their allotment in the Lowbands Estate, were entertained by the Chartists to a sumptuous dinner. Glasses were raised to "O'Connor, M.P., father and founder of the Land Plan, the greatest benefactor of the human race." When the Acclam family left on August 9th, they were given a hearty send-off. Thousands of people, headed by a brass band, escorted them in a procession to the railway station.¹⁷⁶ In all, 345 individuals in Barnsley joined the Scheme, subscribing a total of £557. Of these members, 286, or 83 per cent, were linen weavers.¹⁷⁷ In the heyday of the Land Scheme the Barnsley Chartists were extremely active. They held frequent meetings and tried to influence such local affairs as vestry elections.¹⁷⁸ But few actively pursued political reform.

It was therefore left to the militant Irish Democratic Confederation on March 19th, 1848 to send a message of congratulation to the French Provisional Government. The Confederation, under the chairmanship of Peter Hoey, expressed its debt to the Frenchmen for diffusing "the blessings of

¹⁷⁴ The Northern Star, May 31, 1845, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., Aug. 16, 1845, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., Aug. 14, 1847, p. 8; David Jones, op.cit., p. 132.

¹⁷⁷ Salt, op.cit., p. 23. I am indebted to Mrs. Dorothy Thompson for supplying me with the figures containing the breakdown of the occupational groups belonging to the Land Company. At this time, linen weavers constituted about 45 per cent of the town population.

¹⁷⁸ See The Leeds Times, Feb. 12, 1847, p. 5.

freedom to the confines of the earth."¹⁷⁹ The excitement soon caught on.

A public meeting early in April resolved:

Shall the men of England, Scotland and
Ireland remain quiescent, with arms
folded, mere spectators of the glorious
struggles for freedom, which is now
animating the universal lovers of liberty?
No, Sirs, forbid heaven!

Frank Mirfield was selected to represent Barnsley at the National Convention. Mirfield told the Convention that his constituents had vowed that "if the government let the military loose upon Ireland, something else would be let loose here" (Cheers). He advised the Convention that, if the Charter were rejected, they should set up a "government of the people which would allot land to every man, giving him an opportunity to earn his living by the sweat of his brow."¹⁸⁰

Back in Barnsley excitement prevailed. On April 10th a Chartist public meeting condemned the Government's interference with the peaceful procession in London which was to accompany the Petition. The magistrates received a warning that some Chartists were arming themselves with pikes and fire-arms. On that day they swore in 920 special constables and called in troops to occupy temporary barracks.¹⁸¹ The crowd which assembled on

¹⁷⁹ The Northern Star, Ap. 1, 1848, p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., Ap. 8, 1848, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ The Leeds Times, Ap. 22, 1848, p. 5; P.R.O., H.O.45/2410, pt.4: Spencer Stanhope to Home Office, Ap. 7, 1848; Marshall to Home Office, Ap. 14, 1848; Commander of the 4th Dragoons to Home Office, Ap. 16, 1848; Lt. General Sir Thomas Arberthurst to Home Office, Ap. 28, 1848.

May 1st to listen to Mirfield's report on the Convention declared that they looked "upon the signs of the times as indicative that the day of the people's political redemption draweth nigh."¹⁸² Excited meetings were held throughout May and June but the leaders exhorted the Chartists to refrain from violent action. Nevertheless, fear prevailed among the middle class. In June proprietors of 14 linen firms petitioned the magistrates to help in overcoming "the increasing spirit of insubordination and disaffection" among the working classes.¹⁸³ By the Autumn the situation was already calm. Apart from Mirfield, the outstanding leaders of this short spurt of political agitation were members of the Irish Democratic Confederation: Seagrave, Shaw, or Daly. Veteran Chartists, like John Vallance, did not figure in these commotions. From then on Chartist activity in the town consisted of occasional meetings confined to a few diehards.

In August 1850 some Chartists celebrated the Barnsley Feast by going on a picnic on the Wharnccliffe Rocks.¹⁸⁴ Between 1851 and 1853 a number of national Chartist leaders, especially Vincent, Kydd, Gammage and Ernest Jones, gave public lectures. Their topics were mostly restricted to such harmless subjects as temperance or 'civil and religious liberty'. Even the Leeds Mercury found words of praise for these lectures.¹⁸⁵ But a few speakers, especially Ernest Jones, drew loud applause when they dilated upon the issue of class power.¹⁸⁶ In 1854, when a public meeting was held

¹⁸² The Northern Star, May 6, 1848, p. 5.

¹⁸³ P.R.O., H.O. 45/2410, Pt. 4: Memorial enclosed in Marshall to Home Office, June 7, 1848.

¹⁸⁴ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., p. 314.

¹⁸⁵ The Leeds Mercury, May 24, 1851, p. 10; Idem, Mar. 19, 1853, p. 10.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., July 16, 1853, p. 10.

to consider electing a representative to the Manchester 'Labour Parliament', Joseph Wilkinson thought that apathy among the town's working class was so rampant that a delegate would not get financial support. But Mirfield confidently asserted that Barnsley had never failed in its duty of supporting the working men's cause. A delegate was sent to Manchester but thenceforward activity virtually ceased.¹⁸⁷ Where was that class-consciousness which labouring Barnsley had for years so boldly manifested? Perhaps it is worthwhile examining the careers of some leading Chartists.

Joseph Crabtree was born in Dewsbury in 1807. He came to Barnsley at the age of 14 as a parish apprentice in hand-loom weaving. He was a model of a self-taught working man. He learnt nothing in Sunday school, but his wife later taught him how to read and write. He taught himself grammar and mastered it so well that, at one time, he entertained the idea of writing a grammar text book for the use of working men. He also learnt a little Latin and French. He started his radical career in the early 1830's. He led the short-lived local Zaetetic society, but infidel views were repugnant to most Barnsley radicals. Crabtree soon operated within the framework of mainstream working-class radicalism. He sold unstamped papers, led the local protest against the New Poor Law and became a leading supporter of Feargus O'Connor. For a year, at least, he was a resident reporter for the Northern Star. His 'Freeman's Inn', as we saw, was a regular meeting

¹⁸⁷ The Sheffield Free Press, Mar. 4, 1854, p. 5.

place for the Chartists. Though his speeches were virulent, Crabtree often advised the Chartists against the use of violence. While he was serving his prison sentence for his part in the demonstrations of August 12th 1839, stories were circulated that he had turned informer. In a letter to his wife he expressed profound disappointment with the slander. In his interview with the Inspector of prisons in 1841 he expressed the view that the cause of Chartism had been betrayed by those who had duped others into insurrectionary activities. He vowed: "I shall keep out of politics and look to my family. I shall try and get into the Police." In 1845 he moved to Heckmondwike where he became, not a policeman but a school master. Before he died, he dictated to his son a short epitaph to be inscribed on his tombstone. It ran: "He loved mankind, which caused him many bitter, mournful hours."¹⁸⁸

William Ashton's exit from Chartist politics was not so voluntary. He was born in Barnsley in 1806. His mother was Irish but his father's nationality is unknown. But Ashton always identified himself as Irish Catholic. He came to prominence during the 1829 weavers' strike after which he was transported. When he returned in 1838, he immediately rose to prominence in the Chartist movement. In June 1839, he and George White of Leeds were appointed by a county delegate meeting to act as Chartist missionaries in the West Riding. On the platform, he led the verbal battle against Tories, Whigs and their 'crawling minions'. He was the embodiment

¹⁸⁸ Burland, "Miscellaneous Writings," op.cit., pp. 474-477; Joseph Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary" (MSS & cuttings, B.R.L.) pp. 151f.; Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 144f.; P.R.O., H.O.20/10 Report of the Inspector of Prisons, 1841.

of class hatred. His language against the middle and upper classes was loaded with the most abusive epithets. In June 1839, when the Chartists were being harrassed by the magistrates, Ashton brought a legal action against five individuals for illegal drilling. These were not Chartists but middle-class individuals who were strongly anti-Chartist. The case, for which O'Connor was counsel for the prosecution, was later dismissed. While he was a Chartist prisoner, between 1840 and 1842, Ashton maintained close contact with the Barnsley Chartists. His letters, with titles like 'Voice from the Dungeon', carried words of encouragement for the townsmen to continue the struggle. In a confidential report, the Inspector of prisons remarked in 1841 that Ashton's "hatred of the Government of his country is incredible." But when Ashton left prison and challenged O'Connor's integrity over the Newport rising, his fellow townsmen passed a motion of censure against him. He was never again allowed to speak at Chartist or weavers' meetings. In 1843 he went to America but returned after ten months. In the 1850's he emigrated to Australia where he died in 1877.¹⁸⁹

Some, certainly the majority, who dropped out of the movement remained in Barnsley. One of them was John Widdop, a linen warehouseman, who in the 1830's spearheaded working-class mutual improvement. He was once described as a "walking encyclopaedia". In his library he had a full run of the Northern Star, and was one of the major sources for the Chartist reminiscences which the Barnsley Chronicle published in the 'seventies and 'eighties. During Chartism, he once acted as chairman of the Barnsley Northern Union. He was arrested in 1839 and later released on his own

¹⁸⁹ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 115ff; Wilkinson, Ibid., pp. 154-162; Vamplew, op.cit., pp. 23f. The Leeds Times, June 15, 1839, p. 5. P.R.O., H.O. 20/10: Inspector of Prisons' Report 1841.

recognisance - at which point he vowed to himself never again to engage in politics. It is said that thenceforward his political leanings were conservative, though in his later life he "never wearied of narrating his early Chartist experiences."¹⁹⁰

There were others, however, who were resilient. Peter Hoey, born in Drogheda, Ireland, in 1802, came to Barnsley in 1826. He manifested his leadership qualities during the weavers' strike of 1829. In the 1830's he was president of the weavers' union. His house in Wilson's Piece was a Chartist meeting place. One ex-Chartist once recorded that it was the "headquarters of democracy." Like O'Connor, Hoey firmly believed in a united struggle of the working classes of England and Ireland. From the early 1840's, after he had served his prison term for his Chartist activities, he put this belief into practice by taking a leading part in the agitation for both the Charter and Irish independence. Having been lamed in prison, he was unable to ply the loom efficiently. He opened a shop in Sheffield in the 1850's but made no headway. He died in 1875 in one of the Duke of Norfolk's almshouses.¹⁹¹

Frank Mirfield was even more resilient. He was born in Bristol and deserted by his parents when he was an infant. He was transported with Ashton in 1830. He returned to Barnsley in 1840, his fare having been paid out of the Chartists' subscriptions. He immediately rose to prominence

¹⁹⁰ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., pp. 113-115; Sheffield Archives, Newspaper Cuttings, Vol.39, No. 924.745, p. 220; Alexander Paterson, History of Barnsley Journalism, (Barnsley, 1890?), p. 84.

¹⁹¹ Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary" op.cit., pp. 149-151; Burland, "Miscellaneous Writings", op.cit., p. 236; P.R.O., H.O. 20/10: Inspector of Prison's Report, 1841.

in the Chartist movement and in 1848 he was, as we saw, Barnsley's representative at the National Convention where he gave a highly militant speech. Until his death, he remained an ardent advocate of independent working-class action. He was the leading figure in the few Chartist meetings held during the 'fifties. While ex-Chartists like Vallance allied with the middle class in the campaign for sanitary reform, Mirfield was satisfied with mobilizing working-class support and sending a petition from the residents of Wilson's Piece for sanitary improvement. His covering letter, already discussed, asserted the right of the working class to education and dignity.¹⁹² He was in the forefront of the hand-loom weavers' struggle against the erosion of their piece rates. When Mirfield died in 1869, the hand-loom weavers' Association died with him. And so, probably, did the old Barnsley tradition of independent working-class political action.¹⁹³

Unlike Mirfield, John Vallance, another life-long advocate of the working class, underwent a remarkable ideological transformation, especially after the early 1840's. He was born in Lancashire in 1794. He was brought up as a weaver and came to Barnsley in 1813 to practice his trade. Vallance's radical activities in 1816-1820 earned him a death sentence for participating in the Grange Moor insurrection. But he was later released.¹⁹⁴ Like Hoey, he was a prominent weavers' leader. A self-educated man, who was once described as "the most intelligent" of his class, Vallance acted on many occasions as the workmen's representative. In 1838 he gave evidence before

¹⁹² See above, Chapter Five, pp. 298f.

¹⁹³ Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., passim; Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary", op.cit., p. 148; The Barnsley Chronicle, Aug. 20, 1892.

¹⁹⁴ See Chapter Eight above, p. 427.

the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission. He chaired more Chartist meetings than any other leader and represented the Barnsley Chartists at many delegate meetings. Sobered probably by his experience after Grange Moor, he always counselled his fellow working men to refrain from physical confrontation with the authorities. But at the height of the agitation he remained an uncompromizing Chartist. He was arrested and prosecuted after the Chartist meeting of August 12th 1839. After 1842, he became more circumspect. Although he belonged to the Land Company, he never figured in the disturbances of 1848. From the late 1840's his activities were mainly restricted to Co-operation and social reform. He was a founder-member of the Barnsley Flour Society, a working men's Co-operative founded in 1848 for the milling and selling of flour. Like the contemporaneous societies, it engaged in 'shopkeeping' and not 'community building'.¹⁹⁵ In the 1850's Vallance was active in the sanitary reform movement which provided a meeting point for the middle- and working-class social reformers.¹⁹⁶ In the last days of his life, he was described as a man who was respected by different classes of people. His obituarist remarked in 1882: "it is a pleasant evidence of the changed feeling between classes ... that the veteran Radical was not allowed by his wealthy neighbours to want the comforts of life in his last days."¹⁹⁷

A great promoter of this class harmony was Thomas Lingard whose father had openly defied the law against unstamped papers. Lingard was arrested

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See Royden Harrison, op.cit., pp. 8f.

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See Chapter Five above.

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Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary" op.cit., pp. 207-262. Burland, "Annals of Barnsley", op.cit., passim.

together with Vallance and others in 1839. In 1858 he published the Barnsley Chronicle and became its sole proprietor in 1862. The Chronicle was a leading exponent of Gladstonian liberalism.¹⁹⁸

Some of the ex-Chartists imbibed the liberal creed through the medium of the Franklin Club, a working-class mutual improvement society founded in 1843. As we saw earlier, it started off as a form of 'educational Chartism', asserting its independence from middle-class patronage, but later reversed this position.¹⁹⁹ In time, it grew to look upon working-class culture with disdain and to aspire to middle-class values. Its leading members, almost all of whom had been leading Chartists, abandoned the struggle for political reform from the early or mid-1840's. Maudsley, Burland or Wilkinson, to mention but a few, figured neither in the Land Company nor in the agitations of 1848. Knowledge rather than political agitation promised redemption to the working man. Samuel Smiles' 'Social Gospel' was exerting tremendous influence.²⁰⁰ In his 'Hymn to the Franklins' John Burland made his point forcibly:

Degraded churls! why listless stand?
The work of progress needs a hand!
The Franklin club will lead the van!
In striving for the rights of man.

.....
To linger on through life unblest
Accords not with your interest;
With new awaken'd zeal begin
A higher social grade to win.

In close determined ranks array'd,
The realms of ignorance invade,
Or never will you live to see
Mankind fraternal, equal, free. 201

¹⁹⁸ Patterson, op.cit., p. 57; Wilkinson, "Barnsley Obituary", op.cit., pp. 43-61.

¹⁹⁹ See above, Chapter One, pp. 77-80.

²⁰⁰ See J.F.C. Harrison, Learning and Living (1963 ed.), Ch. V.

²⁰¹ Burland, Mr. Burlands Poems (Barnsley, 1850?), p. 41.

In August 1848, while the military was still in the temporary barracks to maintain peace, the members of the Franklin Club had a grand picnic in Stainborough Park. On that occasion the leading members addressed their colleagues on "how much more rational it is for persons to blend instruction and innocent amusement ... than to spend their leisure hours on the ale bench and in brutal sports." Working men who followed such a noble cause would gain their position in society, "for as they became sober, self-denying, and intelligent, they also became guarded against the declamations of the political demagogues."²⁰²

At the Club's annual soiree in 1855 Lawton, the Secretary, drew the attention of his audience to the dangers of working-class ignorance:

Who is an ignorant man? He is prejudiced and dark. The streets and lanes are his college and school, for him the poet sings in vain and he heeds not the richest facts of science. For him the past, with its solemn utterances - the tongue of centuries - appeals in vain. Yet if he cannot do much good, he is capable of afflicting mankind. His vacant bold, unintelligible gaze, his speech, his example stereotypes itself in the life and conduct of his own children. When he attends the public meeting he answers his opponents' arguments with goose logic - hisses. All the patriotism he possesses can be throttled out of him by the clutches of John Barleycon.

The speaker drew the portrait of John Bull whom he represented as labouring under a disease, and who was continually being doctored, but never received the proper treatment. He was sometimes "flattered" and told that 'Britons never shall be slaves.' A treatment, said Lawton, "Very palatable to John Bull but which only tended to aggravate his malady."²⁰³

²⁰² The Leeds Times, Aug. 26, 1848, p. 8.

²⁰³ The Barnsley Times, Ap. 14, 1855, p. 2.

These were words which could not but delight the town's patriarchs. In 1856, for example, the society received donations from lawyers, manufacturers and businessmen. Some of them were, in fact, office holders in the Club. What had started off as an instrument of working-class struggle and mutual improvement eventually became a medium for working-class assimilation to middle-class values and a hotbed of 'class collaboration.'

In conclusion, the transformation of the Chartists, which should not be over-emphasized, has to be seen in its proper perspective. The Chartists in the mainstream of the movement had pursued, it may be argued, not the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' but power-sharing. But the bourgeoisie had proved intransigent. In the mid-Victorian period, however, the bourgeoisie, confident of its own ascendancy, was now more accommodating. Not only was it more receptive to social reform, but it was also willing to allow at least a modicum of working-class participation in the decision-making process. Thus from the 1850's Barnsley saw the end of the oligarchic parochial institutions, and more and more working men came to play important roles in local affairs. Along with this, was the change in the economic and, therefore, occupational structures which became increasingly diversified. Hand-loom weaving, which for decades had dominated the town's radical culture, was not only shrinking but being confined to older members of the community. The future was not theirs.

CONCLUSION

This study has dealt with two main interrelated themes. In the first place, it has traced the twin processes of industrial development and urbanization, in a local context, during part of England's first Industrial Revolution. An attempt has been made to assess the impact of these processes on the lives of working people within that local environment - the township of Barnsley. Secondly, the attempt by the working people to cope with this world of rapid social and economic change has been examined. But the developments to which these people reacted were not independent of their existence; they (the working people) played an integral part in the moulding of these developments. Our central focus has therefore been the interaction between the workers and their environment.

Barnsley, the centre of English linen manufacture in the early 19th century, has provided us with an opportunity to re-examine some of the important issues arising from the interminable discussion on the Industrial Revolution. For most of our period the production of linen was unmechanized. Even when factory production finally arrived in the 1840's, it employed only a small proportion of the labour force. Would it be valid to suggest that hand-loom linen weaving was not part of the Industrial Revolution, but rather was a remnant of the pre-industrial era, standing in the way of capitalist development? Such a postulation would be a manifestation of a serious lack of understanding of the nature of the Industrial Revolution. The actual method of producing linen may have belonged to pre-industrial technology but the system of linen manufacture, taken as a whole, was as much a part of industrial capitalism as was the production of goods by mechanical power. The industry belonged to the textile economy which, arguably, was in the vanguard of the Industrial Revolution.

The linen trade of Barnsley benefited not only from the development of such basic infrastructures as canals and railways but also from the growth of important capitalist institutions, especially credit and other financial institutions, and marketing arrangements. The relations between manufacturers and their workmen were governed, not by any system of paternalism, but by the cash nexus. The hand-loom linen weaver was not an independent master, superintending journeymen-weavers who entertained the hope of becoming self-employed masters. He stood no chance of gaining access to the complicated credit system for financing production. The forces of competition increasingly favoured large-scale operation. There were still gradations among the weavers but such gradations were secondary to the fact that all the weavers were 'alienated' from the ownership of the major means of production, reduced to the sale of their labour power. Even the ownership of a loom did not, as we have seen, affect this basic fact. Also, the industry and its workers were exposed to the evils of economic crises, characteristic of the capitalist economy.

It is a mistake to insist on the importance of the application of steam power as the mainspring of the Industrial Revolution. Industrial capitalism had many causes and the development of it as a system did not depend, in the case of linen weaving, on a revolution in the methods of production. Technical changes there were, as we have shown in the story of the introduction of the jacquard loom, but the means of power continued to depend entirely on human energy until the advent of the power-loom in the 1840's. The Barnsley hand-loom linen weavers, long before the 1840's, were fully subjected to the other processes of industrialization. The growth of financial and marketing institutions, the organization of production and the kind of property relations it engendered, constituted features of industrial capitalism which locked hand-loom linen weaving into the system as surely as any steam engine.

Hand-loom linen weavers suffered from a work discipline which had nothing directly to do with the dictatorship of the steam engine over the factory hand. The manufacturers' need to compete in the cloth market compelled them to drive the weavers into a work discipline almost as tyrannical as any imposed by overlookers or the factory clock. This was achieved by a system of piece-rates and fines for shoddy work.¹ If yarn embezzlement was a slight problem, as it was for the linen manufacturers, a disciplinary system based on piece-rates, low as they usually were, proved an efficient and cheaper method of exacting maximum production from the weavers:

"What town in England is the most likely, in a time of emergency, to raise an army of disciplined men?"
"That's a puzzler," replied Jonathan.
"Indeed, Sir! Why, Barnsley, to be sure."
"How so, friend Thornton?" "Because 2,000 of its inhabitants are continually at drill." 2

It has been found necessary to dwell on this point because there is an automatic tendency among many commentators to associate the Industrial Revolution primarily with the development of steam power. This study has tried to highlight the importance of other factors.

¹ Marx and Engels were therefore only simplifying matters somewhat when they implicitly attributed the work discipline suffered by the industrial proletariat solely to the rise of factory production: Manifesto of the Communist Party (Moscow, 1952 ed.) pp. 50f.

² Ned Nut (pseud.) The Barnsley and Village Record or The Book of Facts and Fancies, (Barnsley, 1840), p. 1. At first sight it might appear that the author was referring to Chartist drilling; but this is unlikely for two reasons: 1) As we have seen in Ch. Nine, Section III, it is debatable whether there was any drilling in Barnsley and, if it occurred, it is likely to have involved a small number of people at excited moments only. 2) The 2,000 people said to have been continually "at drill" is close to the number of weavers in the town at the time.

The story of Barnsley linen is the story of a declining trade, with traumatic effects on the industry's labour force. Admittedly, we lack reliable indices of measurement, but the weight of literary evidence and such statistical sources as are available, show a marked deterioration in the condition of the industry's labour force, especially the hand-loom weavers. The system of relief failed to cope with their plight. As far as this group of workers was concerned, it would not be valid to state that the Industrial Revolution improved their material welfare. This is no place to enter the standard of living controversy,³ but from the experience of this study a point of general interest ought to be made: that conditions of life were experienced by real people in their real situations. Historians have an obligation to attempt to get as close to them as they possibly can. The Barnsley linen weaver's sense of despair was probably reinforced and embittered, not only by the affluence of his employer, but also by his awareness of the relatively stable position of his local peer groups, for example, the miners. Micro-studies, whether geographical or industrial, are clearly a pre-requisite to understanding both the levels and perceptions of living standards.

Originally this work was intended to be a local study of working-class radicalism. But in the course of its development, one discovered that, to understand radicalism one needed as wide a frame of reference as one could muster. It was found necessary to reconstruct, with the resources on hand,

³ See, for example, R.M. Hartwell, The Industrial Revolution and Economic Growth (1971), Chs. 13 and 14.

the working-class world; for how could the wide-ranging ramifications of such a monumental aspect of working-class behaviour as radicalism be properly grasped unless analysed in its proper context - the working-class environment. But the working-class world did not have an independent existence; it formed part of the larger world of class relationships. Our quest for the understanding of this larger world led us to examine the social and occupational structures of the town, the comparative economic history of its staple industries, the conditions of employment and existence, the demographic factors, and some of the current motivations, ideas and beliefs. Thus we have emerged not only with a picture of the Barnsley working-class and its situation but also with an appreciation of the magnitude of the forces, personal and impersonal, which it had to contend with: its employers, its rulers, fluctuations in employment, its poverty, its exploitation, its social and political segregation. We have tried to grasp not only the nature of the relationship among groups within the working class itself but also that of its relationship with the larger world.

We have tried to discern, for example, the interaction of the miners and the weavers. When the miners capitulated in their strike of 1844, the weavers encouraged the former to fight on. We have shown the conflicts between strikers and blacklegs, or between Chartists and working-class 'conservatives'. Outside this working-class world, we have seen, for example, the relevance of the perspective of Barnsley's employers, prone to panic at the prospects of merest Chartist demonstrations or weavers' public meetings, in bringing in the military to frighten or repress the protestors. The relative comfort of the middle classes (whether in housing, sanitation or other forms of material welfare), their domination of power to the exclusion of labouring men, or their insensitivity to the sufferings of the poor, conspired, in combination with other factors, to precipitate class conflict. A diversity of sources, literary and statistical, has

been explored. It is hoped that this study has, at least, indicated to the students of working-class history the benefits to be derived from looking beyond the confines of general labour history, which has tended to concentrate on working-class movements without trying to paint a picture of the world in which these movements occurred.

The evidence heavily points to the existence in Barnsley of a class system which discriminated against the working class in many ways. Not only did property and capital bestow upon their owners material wealth, or at least relatively decent standards of life, but, in fact, rewarded many of them with influence and powers. Not only was the working class subjected to a precarious and indeed, declining level of existence, or to hazardous occupations, but they were also excluded from the decision-making process in matters of the whole community, and were generally confined to neglected and unattractive residential districts. At national level, their subordinate role was reinforced by their exclusion from participation in the political process.

The struggle by the Barnsley working class against this hostile world was waged at many levels at different points in time. Strikes were organized to resist wage cuts or to improve wages; mutual improvement institutions were created to enhance the knowledge of the working man; and protests were made against this or that particular grievance. But, over the period, labouring Barnsley expressed a sentiment of solidarity, addressing itself to matters which transcended work and place, and fought, jointly with and on behalf of the rest of the British working class, for the redistribution of economic and political power. Their participation in Chartism strongly illustrates this point. This class-consciousness, which ebbed and flowed, was not simply dictated by economic fluctuations, or any other single grievance, but was a product of the total working-class experience, including the ideas to which this class was exposed.

It is legitimate to suggest that if, in the early 19th century, the town had not had a monocultural declining economy based on linen, its working-class history might have been different. Class relations would probably not have been so sharply defined; some of the unpalatable realities of urban-industrialism and class power, perhaps, would not have presented themselves in so naked a form; and, almost certainly, the existence of diverse occupational groups, none of which would have occupied a dominant numerical position, would have engendered a conflict of interests between the groups, thus weakening class-consciousness. But as a study of Coventry has shown, the existence of an ailing monolithic industry in a locality need not give rise to a strong class-consciousness among its labour force. The Coventry ribbon weavers hardly manifested any class-consciousness mainly for three reasons: there was a system of "lavish" poor relief; the weavers who had served their periods of apprenticeship enjoyed a franchise and other freemen's rights; and there was not, strictly speaking, a 'resident bourgeoisie' since most of the silk manufacturers lived in London.⁴ In Barnsley, however, poor relief was pitifully inadequate. The weavers enjoyed no franchise and, in this oligarchic manorial town, they usually occupied the receiving end in public affairs. The linen manufacturers lived in the town, a scene of confrontation between the working class and their social betters. These are some of the key factors which made labouring Barnsley strongly class-conscious.

⁴ See Peter Searby, "Weavers and Freemen in Coventry, 1820-1861: Social and Political Traditionalism in an Early Victorian Town," (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Warwick, 1972), abstract et passim.

This work is not definitive. Many enigmas and loose ends remain, owing, mainly, to source constraints and to the necessity of having to treat our subject within the confines of a given period. Because coal-mining expanded later in our period, the industry and its workers have not received as comprehensive a treatment as linen and its labour force. From the end of our period to the present day, the miners of Barnsley have earned themselves a reputation as a militant labour force. It would have been interesting to ask to what extent this militancy was a legacy of the departed linen weavers.

In examining working-class struggles, we have concentrated on industrial and political conflicts to the relative exclusion of other forms of working-class struggle which did not involve class confrontation. Our knowledge of the Barnsley working class would be enhanced if we knew more about its participation in friendly societies, in religious activities, in certain social reforms like temperance and in other cultural expressions.

Finally the decline of class-consciousness, characterized by the fall of Chartism, has not been adequately explained. Perhaps such an explanation is impossible to achieve at local level, for, although Chartism had strong local roots, it was essentially a national movement. It was impossible for one or two communities to pursue Chartism after it had collapsed nationally. Its decline can only be comprehensively analysed at national level. But, not having pursued the Barnsley working class to the period of mid-Victorian liberalism, one is ignorant about the extent to which class consciousness fell after the 1850's, Whether the workers were really 'bourgeoisified' and to what extent, how such a process occurred (if it did), or, in fact, whether their class-consciousness was expressed in other cultural forms, are open questions. These enigmas are part of the price one has to pay for the need to confine oneself to a limited period of history.

There is much that a history of labouring Barnsley in the second half of the nineteenth century could offer.

It is hoped that this study has illuminated a few areas. We have rescued from obscurity the history of Barnsley about which only one book (published more than a century ago) has been written.⁵ We have laid the foundation for writing the history of the English linen trade during the Industrial Revolution. The importance of relating it to other textile industries has been made plain. Our knowledge of coalmining and the miners in the early nineteenth century, about which so little has been written, is now enhanced. The problems of urban industrialism have been pinpointed and, with the aid of statistical data, we have formed an impression of their magnitude. We have re-examined working-class consciousness and we have seen that distinctively human ideals were as important as objective factors in the shaping of this consciousness. One accepts the basic statement that class is not "a thing" but "a relationship embodied in real people."⁶ To that extent it is an unquantifiable phenomenon. Classes, however, interact in a framework of the social hierarchy, the distribution of power and the ownership of property. These basic structures are only partially measurable, and then imperfectly. Our attempt to get at statistical indicators concerning the occupational structure, the residential pattern, the ownership of homes and other forms of property is intended to be a contribution to our understanding of the nature of class.

⁵ Roland Jackson, The History of the Township of Barnsley (1858).

⁶ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (1968 ed.), pp. 9ff.

A P P E N D I X

TREND OF PIECE RATES IN LINEN WEAVING, 1811-1838:

Measure- ment (Beers)	Description of work	Price paid from 1811-1814	1818	1825	1829	1838
		with fent £. s. d.	with fent £. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.
34	7/8 linen	1 2 0	0 17 7	0 18 2	0 14 3	0 13 0
36	4/4 ditto	1 5 4	0 18 8	0 18 8	0 15 6	0 14 6
56	4/5 ditto	2 2 11	1 14 8	1 12 0	1 6 0	1 4 0
66	8/4 ditto	-----	2 13 4	2 0 0	1 7 0	1 5 6
102	10/4 ditto	-----	4 7 6	2 18 0	2 8 0	2 0 0
27	Duck	0 16 6	0 13 0	0 13 0	0 10 0	0 10 0
37	4/4 duck	-----	1 2 0	1 2 0	0 17 7	0 16 0
41	4/4 drabbet	-----	-----	-----	1 8 0	1 4 0
40	8/4 mock tick	-----	-----	-----	-----	0 18 0
42	6/4 tick	-----	2 4 0	1 15 2	1 8 0	1 4 0
36	huckabacks & diapers	2 14 10	1 8 7	1 5 4	0 18 0	0 16 0
54	6/4 ditto	3 12 10	2 11 0	1 13 9	1 5 10	1 3 0
72	8/4 3 divis. common twill	5 10 0	3 17 0	2 14 0	1 17 5	1 15 0
86	plain drill	2 10 0	2 6 0	2 1 0	1 11 8	1 4 0
14	towelling	-----	0 11 0	0 9 4	-----	0 6 0
27 & 28	7/8 towelling	-----	0 11 0	0 9 4	-----	0 6 0
24	Duck	-----	0 12 0	0 11 6	0 8 6	0 8 6
24	Plain glass cloth	-----	-----	-----	0 9 4	0 9 0
28	3/4 huckabacks & diapers	1 10 9	1 3 1	1 0 2	0 15 6	0 12 0
28	3/4 union, ditto	-----	-----	-----	0 14 6	0 10 0
30	plain union	-----	0 16 6	0 16 6	0 11 0	0 9 0
60	plain ditto	-----	2 12 0	1 18 0	1 2 6	0 19 0

Source: P.P. 1840 (43-11), XXIII, Pt.II :

Assistant Commissioners' Report on the Handloom Weavers, p. 482.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

NOTE ON PRIMARY SOURCES:

The student of Barnsley's early nineteenth century social and economic history faces three serious source constraints. First is an absence of published histories of the town. The only general history of Barnsley was published in 1858 (Roland Jackson, The History of the Township of Barnsley). Second is that Barnsley did not have its own newspaper till 1852 (The Barnsley Telegraph). This lasted only seven months and tended to concentrate on national and overseas news. It was not until the publication of the Barnsley Times in 1855 and the Barnsley Chronicle in 1858 that the town got an adequate press coverage. For the period before the 1850's one has to rely on the West Riding press, especially that of Leeds and Sheffield, which as often as not gave Barnsley a mere cursory treatment. The third constraint is that there are no substantial records on the Barnsley linen trade, the town's staple industry in the period. Although, according to the National Register of Archives, the records of Canter, Whaley & Co. (linen manufacturers) are supposed to be located with Messrs. Bury and Walkers (solicitors), the latter, in response to my request, have tried to locate them without success. The Marshall Papers in the Brotherton Library have not revealed anything more than what W.G. Rimmer (Marshall's of Leeds, Flax Spinners) has published. The only official inquiry into the state of the Barnsley linen trade was carried out in July 1838 (Handloom Weavers' Commission) by an overworked Assistant Commissioner who produced a rather perfunctory report which is inferior, both in detail and in quality of analysis, to the same Commission's reports on the Coventry ribbon trade or the Irish linen industry. (The Assistant Commissioner concerned had also to inquire into the linen trade of Germany).

In spite of these basic difficulties, two archival libraries, the Barnsley Public Library (Local Studies) and the Public Record Office, have a lot to offer. The bulk of this study is based on their collections. Any historian working on nineteenth century Barnsley is likely to profit from the works of John Burland and Joseph Wilkinson in the care of the Barnsley Public Library. The two men were active Chartists who spearheaded the working-class self-improvement movement, mainly through the Franklin Club. Burland's four-volume manuscript, "Annals of Barnsley and Its Environs", consists of a day-to-day record of events based on contemporary newspapers, parish registers, personal recollections and, it would appear, Burland's own diary. The author also published many poems and other works of literary and historical interest. Wilkinson's volumes of manuscripts and newspaper clippings in the "Wilkinson Bequest" series are invaluable. They contain, among other things, a wealth of material on Radicalism, Chartism, labour disputes, religion and local government. The author also wrote copiously on different historical aspects of Barnsley, its surroundings and its personalities. Other sources in the same library include: rate books, valuation lists, sermons, pamphlets of many kinds, Poor Law records, and a number of church and chapel records. This collection is a rich mine of Barnsley's social history, especially for one willing to inject a statistical technique into historical analysis.

As the list below would indicate, the records consulted at the Public Record Office belong to many departments. But three main areas are particularly rich: the Home Office correspondence (H.O. series), the Ministry of Health records (M.H. series) and the Census Enumeration schedules (H.O. and R.G. series). The Home Office correspondence contains a great deal of information on Radicalism, Chartism and labour disputes. The voluminous Ministry of Health records at Ashridge, Hertfordshire, have been my major source of information on Poor Law administration and on

sanitation and town improvement. Work on census schedules is dull, tedious and slow in yielding results. But its premium is high. The occupational, residential and ethnic patterns of the town population could not have been achieved without the aid of census sources. The records for two of the Barnsley 1851 enumeration districts (including also the whole of the township of Dodworth) were destroyed, apparently by rain. This represents 1545 people, or 10 per cent of the population. Where the 1851 schedules have been used, I have had to extrapolate from the available figures.

Material from other archives, especially the Cusworth Hall Museum and the Sheffield Central Library, have helped to fill in the yawning gaps. The former contains fragmentary material on linen, adult education (especially the Franklin Club) and other subjects. One hopes that it will not be too long before the Curator of the Museum is able to embark on the cataloguing of this valuable collection. Information of any great value on the Barnsley coal trade can only be found in the Sheffield Central Library (Archives Department). The Clarke and Thorpe collections are extremely important in this connection. Of all the Parliamentary Papers, the 1842 Report of the Children's Employment Commission is the most valuable, containing information on mining, linen weaving and education.

The secondary sources listed below are predominantly those cited in the footnotes. Only very few uncited works, which in one way or another, have greatly influenced this work, have been included. Unless otherwise indicated, the place of publication is London.

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

I. MANUSCRIPTS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS:

1. Barnsley Reference Library:

(i) Rate Books & Valuation Lists:

"Barnsley Valuation of Rateable Property," (1848)
"Barnsley Poor Rate Assessment" (1837 onwards)
"Barnsley Poor Assessment Received" (185-1860)
"Information Poor Rate Defaulters" (1840-1851)
"Barnsley Public Improvement Rate" (1825 onwards)
"Barnsley Lighting and Watching Rate" (1825 onwards)
"Barnsley Paving Rate" (1830 onwards).

(ii) Poor Law Administration:

"Barnsley Overseers Letter Book," Vol.I.
"Minute Book of the Barnsley Poor Law Union," Vols. I & II.

(iii) Chapel Records:

"Baptismal Register of the Barnsley Methodist (Wesleyan) Chapel -
Westgate, 1786 - 1836."
"Sundries on Wesleyanism in the Barnsley Circuit."

(iv) John Hugh Burland Collection:

"Annals of Barnsley and Its Environs," 4 Vols.
"Miscellaneous Writings," 1 Vol.
"Social and Scenic Pictures of Barnsley in the 18th Century." (cuttings)
Miscellaneous Poems.

(v) Joseph Wilkinson Collection (Wilkinson Bequest).

"Barnsley Chapels, Education Schools, School Board, Census, Rejoicings,
Exhibitions."
"Barnsley Diary of Dates, Longevity, Hostelries, Crime, Commons, Newspapers,
Superstitions."
"Barnsley Notices."
"Barnsley Obituary."
"Barnsley Police Commissioners, Board of Health, Corporation."
"Barnsley Public Buildings, Works, Societies, Sessions, Geology, Health."
"Diaries."
"Local History, Military Affairs, Chartism."
"Mining in Barnsley."

(vi) Other Collections:

Eli Hoyle, "History of Barnsley and the Surrounding Districts from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1850."

J. Kavanagh, "An Old Barnsley Weaver's Yarn" (cuttings)

"In and Out and Round Barnsley" (cuttings from the Barnsley Chronicle).

"Half a Century of Progress" (cuttings)

A Chartist Manifesto to the Working People of Barnsley (1838, typescript, Bretton Bequest).

"Early Mention of Coal in Barnsley and District" (2pp. typescript).

2. Barnsley Town Clerk's Department:

"Proceedings of the Commissioners of the Barnsley Improvement Act," 2 Vols..

3. Public Record Office:

(i) Home Office Papers:

H.O.20; H.O. 40; H.O. 42; H.O. 44; H.O. 45; H.O. 52; H.O. 64; H.O. 79.

(ii) Treasury Solicitor's Papers:

T.S.11.

(iii) Assizes Records

ASSI. 41

(iv) Census Enumerators' Schedules:

H.O.107; R.G. 9; R.G. 10.

(v) Customs and Excise Records:

Cust. 5; Cust. 9.

(vi) Ministry of Health Records:

M.H. 12; M.H. 13.

(vii) Registrar General's Records

R.G. 4.

(VIII) Registrar of Friendly Societies' Records

F.S.11.

4. British Library (formerly British Museum):

Place Collection.

5. Sheffield Central Library, Archives Department:

Records of Thorpe of Gawber Hall (Wil.D.)
Records of Clarke of Noblethorpe Hall. (CR)
Newman & Bond (Solicitors) Collection (NBC)
Spencer-Stanhope Muniments.
Newspaper Cuttings (Vol.39, No. 942.745.)
Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments (Fitzwilliam Papers - F.)

6. Cusworth Hall Museum, Doncaster:

1. The Dearmans Bankruptcy Papers.
2. Barnsley Franklin Club Collection.
3. "Report of the Barnsley Committee for the Relief of the Unemployed Workmen." (1826)
4. "Police Statistics of the Township of Barnsley for the Year Ending Dec. 31, 1855."
5. Appointment of Special Constables, April 22, 1812.
6. "Militia List for the Township of Barnsley, 1806."
7. Miscellaneous Collection, mainly on Linen.
8. A Valuation List for the Worsborough Common, 1840.

7. Leeds City Archives, Sheepscar Library:

Harewood Manuscripts; Lieutenancy Papers, Boxes I & II.

8. Brotherton Library: University of Leeds:

Marshall Papers.

9. Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Claremont, Leeds.

Barnsley Deeds.

10. E.G. Tasker Collection, Hollow Gate, Barnsley:

Barnsley Hand-bills.

II. PRINTED SOURCES :

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The Barnsley Chronicle
The Barnsley Telegraph
The Barnsley Times
The Civic Review (Barnsley)
The Sheffield Courant
The Sheffield Free Press
The Sheffield Independent
The Sheffield Iris
The Sheffield Mercury
The Leeds Intelligencer
The Leeds Mercury
The Leeds Patriot
The Leeds Times
The Northern Star
The Voice of the West Riding
The Halifax and Huddersfield Express
The Halifax Guardian
The Wakefield Journal
The Manchester Observer
The Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator
The Northern Liberator
The Crisis
The Mining Journal
The Republican
The True Sun
The Fleet Papers
The Weekly Free Press
Lodge's Almanack

2. Parliamentary Papers :

(i) Industrial:

P.P. 1773 (30), III: Report from the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Present State of the Linen Trade in Great Britain.

P.P. 1840 (43 - 11), XXIII, Assistant Commissioners' Report on the Handloom Weavers.

P.P. 1842 (381), XVI : Children's Employment (mines): Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Report and Evidence.

P.P. 1845 (639); XXV : Report of the Inspector of Factories:

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P.P. 1847 (815), XVI : Report on Gases and Explosions in Collieries.

P.P. 1849 (613), VII : Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Accidents in the Coal Mines.

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P.P. 1867 (3811), XVI : Report upon the Oaks Colliery Explosion and with Reference to the Prevention of Such Occurrences.

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P.P. 1857 (2270, Sess. 2), XVI : Report from the Inspector of Mines.

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(ii) Poor Law and Charities:

P.P. 1826-27 (429), X : Seventeenth Report of the Charity Commissioners.

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P.P. 1837-38 (167), XVIII : Eleventh Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act.

(iii) Statistical:

P.P. 1851 (1416), XXII : Twelfth Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages for England and Wales.

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P.P. 1874 (c.1097) LXXII : Return of Owners of Land.

3. Parliamentary Debates:

Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, Vol. XLI, (1819-20).

4. Acts of Parliament:

33 Geo. III, C.110 : "An Act for Making and Maintaining a Navigable Canal from the River Calder in the Township of Warmfield cum Heath, to or near the town of Barnsley, in the Township of Cawthorne in the West Riding of the County of York; and certain Railways and other Roads, to communicate therewith." (Barnsley Canal Act)."

33 Geo. III. C.115 : "An Act for Making and Maintaining a Navigable Canal from the River Don in the Township of Swinton, to or near Barnsley in the West Riding of the County of York; and certain Railways and other Roads to communicate therewith" (Dearne-and-Dove Canal Act.)

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